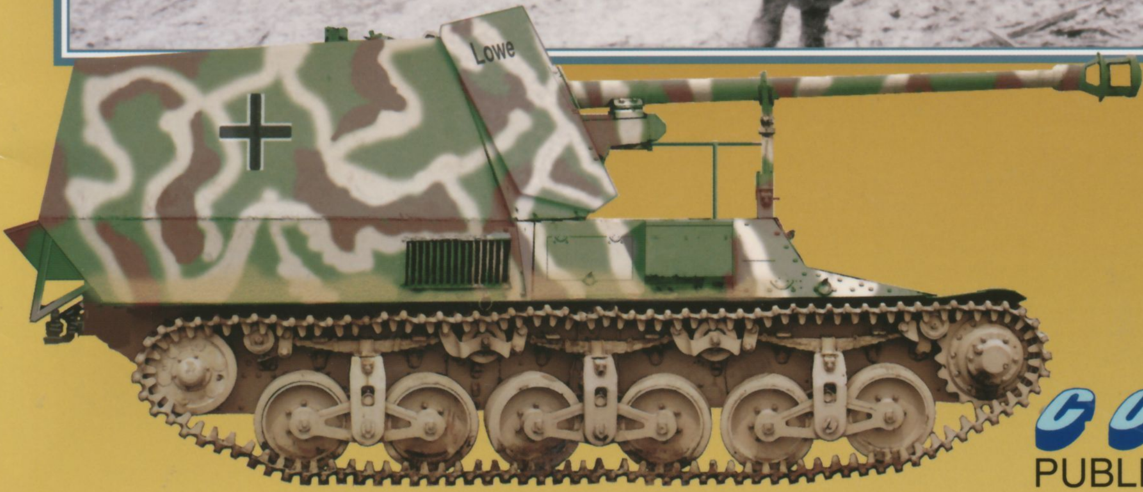
ARMOR AT WAR SERIES

7055

Panzers in the Gunsights

German AFVs in the ETO 1944-45 in US Army Photos

Steven J. Zaloga



CONCORD
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German AFVs in the ETO 1944-45 in US Army Photos

Text and Color Plates by
Steven J. Zaloga

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INTRODUCTION

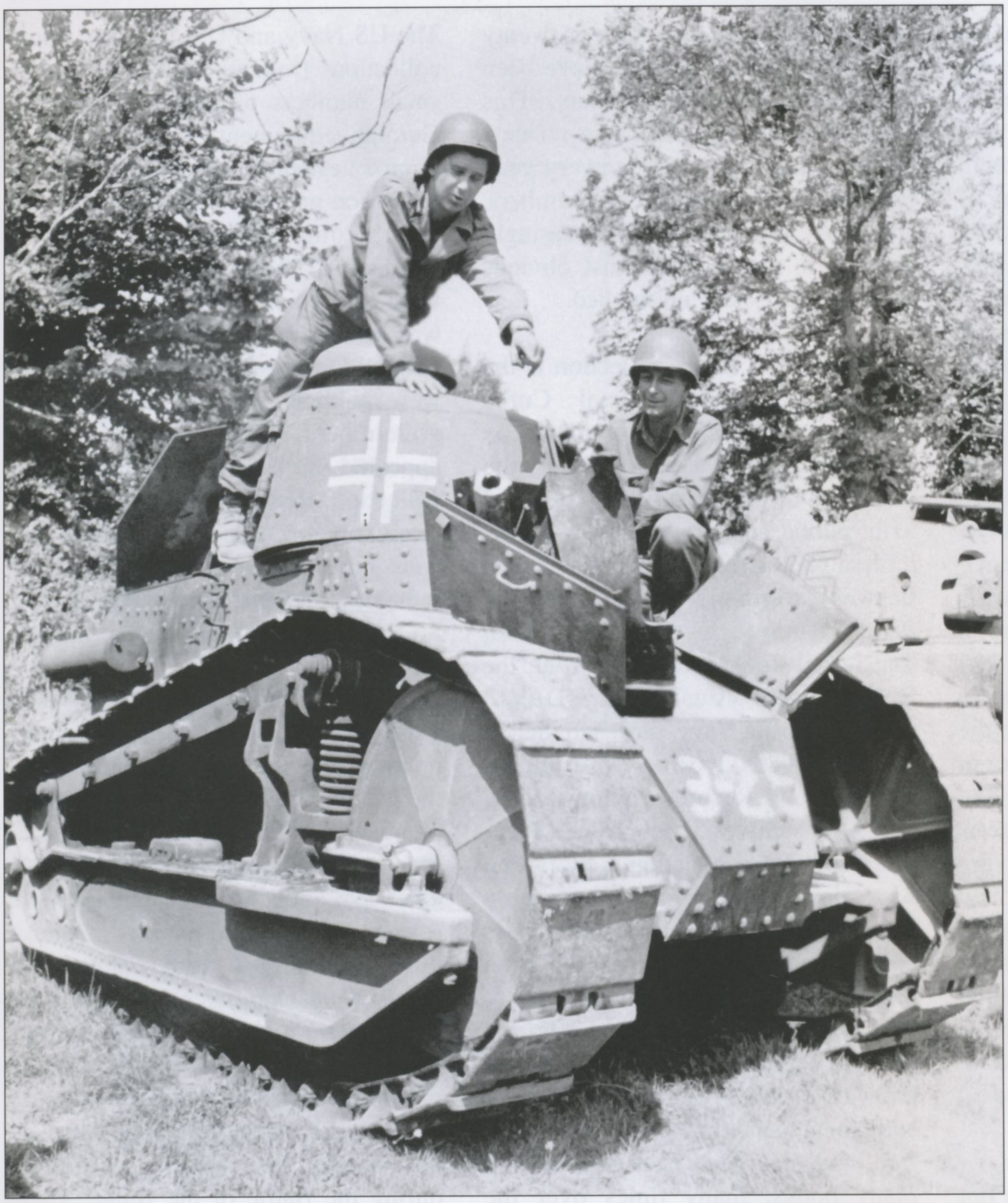
While doing photos research for books on US tanks that have appeared in the Concord "Armor at War" series, I have often come upon rare and unpublished photos of German armored vehicles. I have used many of these in the other Concord titles, since they help explain the tank battles fought by the US Army. However, I have found many other photos of German AFVs that did not appear in these books. Some I found after having done a particular Concord title, for example, new photos from the Ardennes after my Battle of the Bulge book. But others didn't fit in the books for other reasons. Many veterans' photos, and some official US Army Signal Corps photos have either no caption at all, or one that does not provide a clear time or place when the photo was taken. So the Panther in the photo might be in France in 1944, or in Germany in 1945. Sometimes the particular variant or markings suggests the location, but other times, it is very unclear. Besides these uncaptioned photos, I have discovered a number of new photos taken by Ordnance or intelligence teams after the fighting. These often show lesser know vehicle types since the ordnance teams were often looking for new or undiscovered types of weapons.

The photos contained here are not at all representative of US Army photos of German panzers, otherwise the book would be full of photos of non-descript, blown up StuG IIIs, Pz.Kpfw.IVs and other common types. I have tried to select photos that will appeal to AFV enthusiasts, so the selection is slanted towards popular types such as the Panther, Tiger, and less common vehicle types.

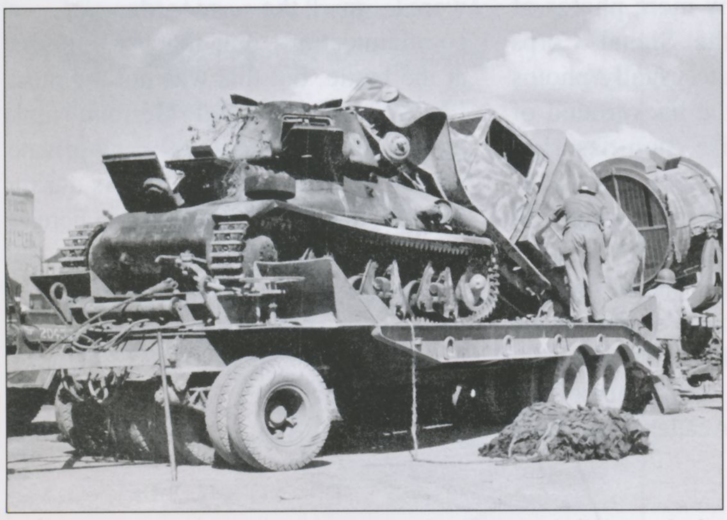
Many AFV buffs seem to think that there are vast troves of undiscovered photos of panzers in the US archives. As someone who has spent thousands of hours scouring through the US photo archives, I know that this is not the case. There has been so much interest in German panzers over the past twenty years, that the US archives have been scoured by many researchers. This does not mean that there are no new photos. I find a few dozen every year. But they are not there in large numbers, and they are becoming increasingly difficult to find as the most obvious locations have been researched.

The largest single collection is the official US Army Signal Corps collection, known to researchers as Record Group 111-SC. This is the collection of photos officially released to the public, and numbers about a half-million photos for World War II alone. It was originally housed in the Pentagon through the 1970s, then transferred for several years at the Defense Audio-Visual Agency (DAVA) at the Anacostia Navy Yard, and then in the late 1980s to the US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Archives II in College Park, Maryland. This collection is by far the best known and the most thoroughly researched. The Army archivists collected most photos of German panzers and included them in a set of over a dozen binders on captured German equipment. These are the best known US photos of captured German equipment since they are the easiest to find, and they have been reprinted in many books, many times over the years. There are many more photos of German AFVs in the Signal Corps collection, but they are usually photos of vehicles seen in the background of photos, or otherwise non-descript. Besides the main collection at NARA-College Park, there are smaller spin-off collections of the same photos at other US Army facilities including the Military History Institute (MHI) at the US Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and at the library of the US Army Military Academy at West Point, New York.

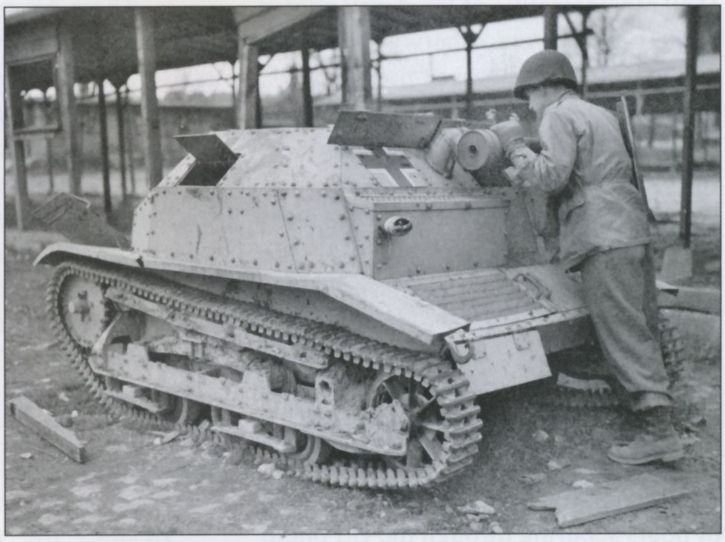
Besides the main Signal Corps collection, photos of German panzers have turned up in many other locations. The US Navy and US Air Force photo collections from World War II contain small numbers of photos of captured German equipment. Some US Army photos escaped the Signal Corps collection process. So for example, the West Point collection includes a number of Ninth Army photos that were restricted from release during the war, and never turned in to the main collection afterwards. Other photos were publicly released through other government agencies and never appeared in the main Signal Corps collection. Besides these photos, other Army organizations took photos that were not publicly released, but which remained in their department records. So for example, Ordnance and military intelligence teams took photos of captured German equipment. These were never collected in a single archive, and remain scattered through the National Archives. Finding these photos is difficult since often two or three photos will be buried in an extensive collection of documents not related to German panzers. Combat units sometimes took photos of knocked out equipment, but these are even scarcer and more difficult to find. For example, in 2004, I found a group of good clear photos of German AFVs of the 116.Panzer-Division knocked out during the fighting in Hotton during the Battle of the Bulge. These were in the records of a communications unit that was present at the battle, but this was not the most likely place to find German tank photos! Finally, there are many private photos of panzers taken by GIs during the war, and some are reprinted here.



Obsolete French tanks like this Renault FT were used by German occupation units in France. This example was photographed in Normandy on 7 August 1944.

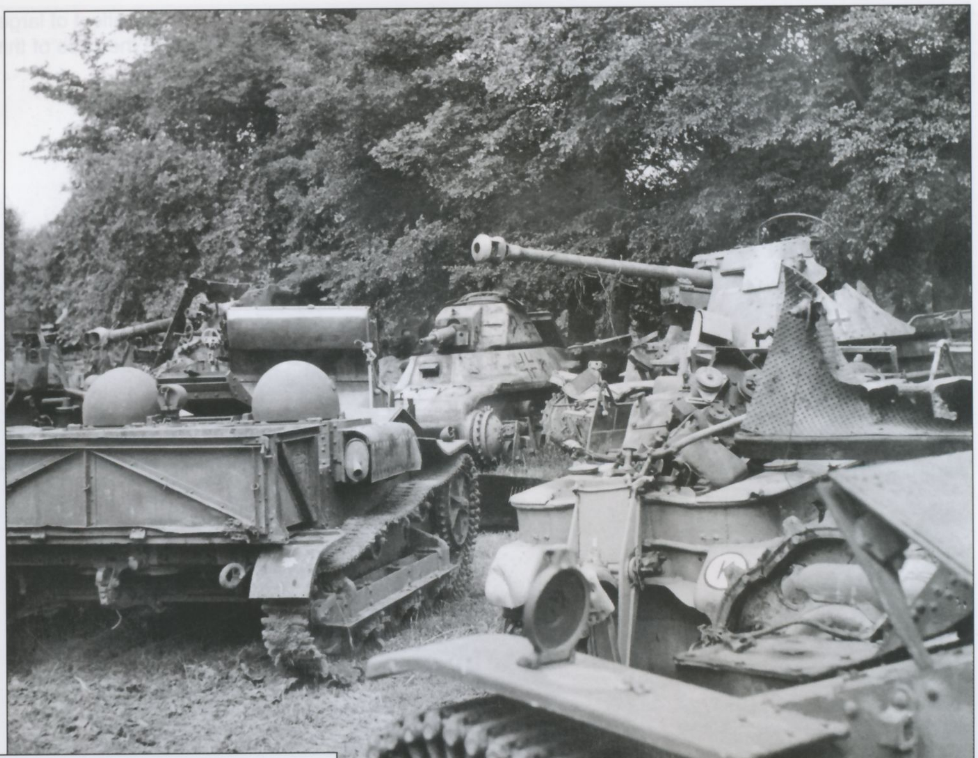


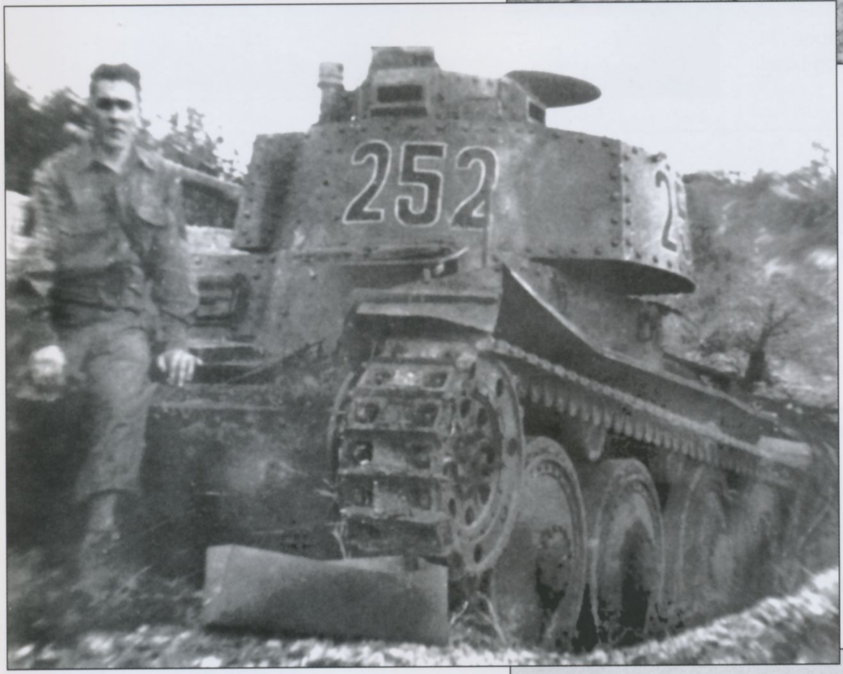
The US Army collected many battlefield wrecks in Normandy for disposal, including this Hotchkiss H-39. These captured French light tanks were widely used by German tank battalions in Normandy which were attached to the divisions assigned to beach defense.



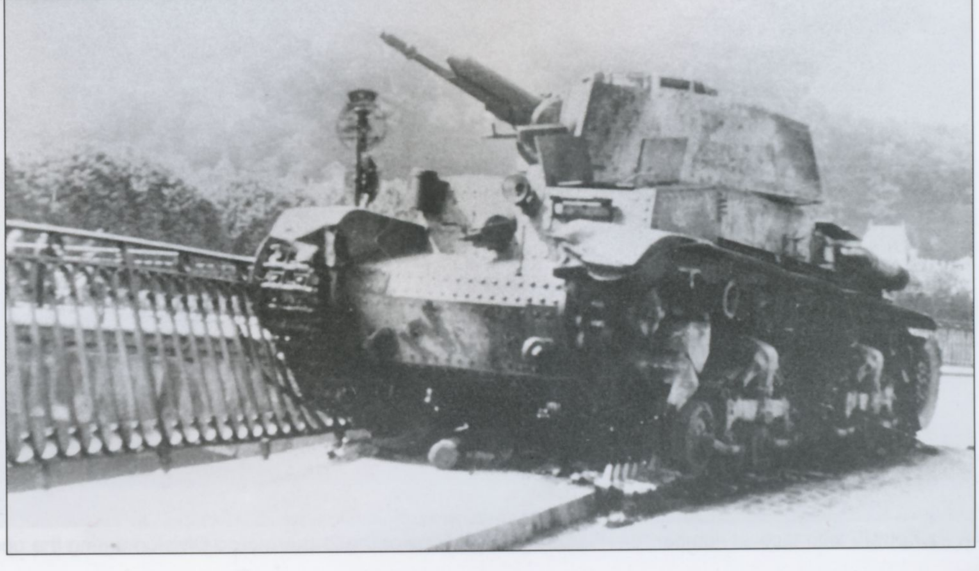
The Polish TKS tankette was used for anti-partisan patrols by German forces on the Russian front and in the Balkans, and was rarely encountered in the west as was the case with this example.

Following the battle of France, the US Army policed up a large number of abandoned German armored vehicles for disposal and technical exploitation, many at a large holding area near Isigny, France. This photo shows a few Renault UE armored tractors, a Hotchkiss H-39, and a 7.5cm PaK40/3 auf Pz.Kpfw.38(t) Ausf.H, and a later Ausf.M in the background with its armored panels blown off.

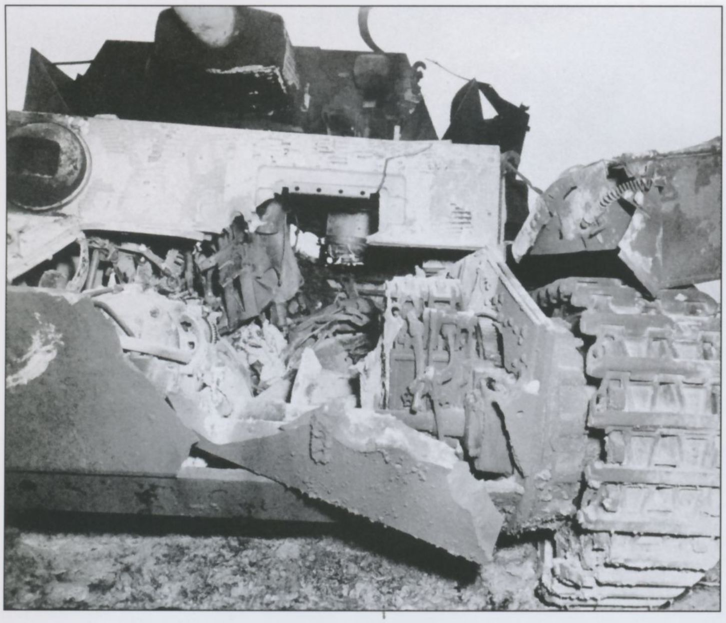




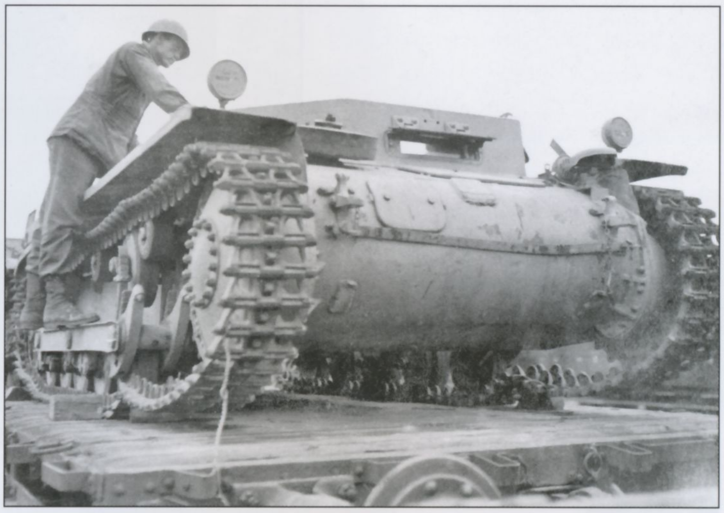
This Pz.Kpfw.38(t) was knocked out by a M18 Hellcat of the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion during the fighting along the Siegfried line in the Saar near Ober Pearl in December 1944.



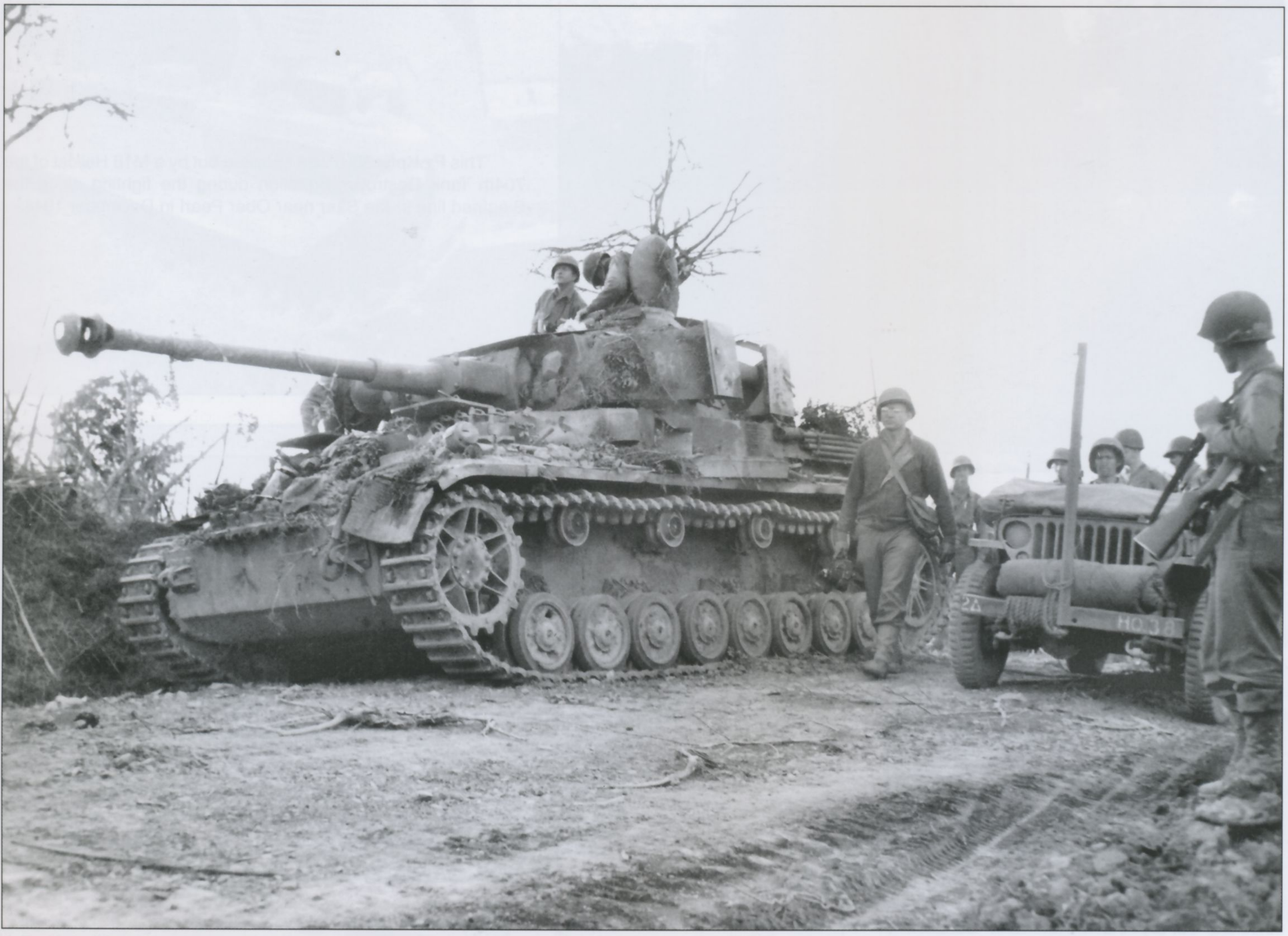
Obsolete tanks occasionally appeared on the battlefield, especially in the desperate days of the spring of 1945. This Pz.Kpfw.35(t) was knocked out by the 704th Tank Battalion in Germany in 1945.



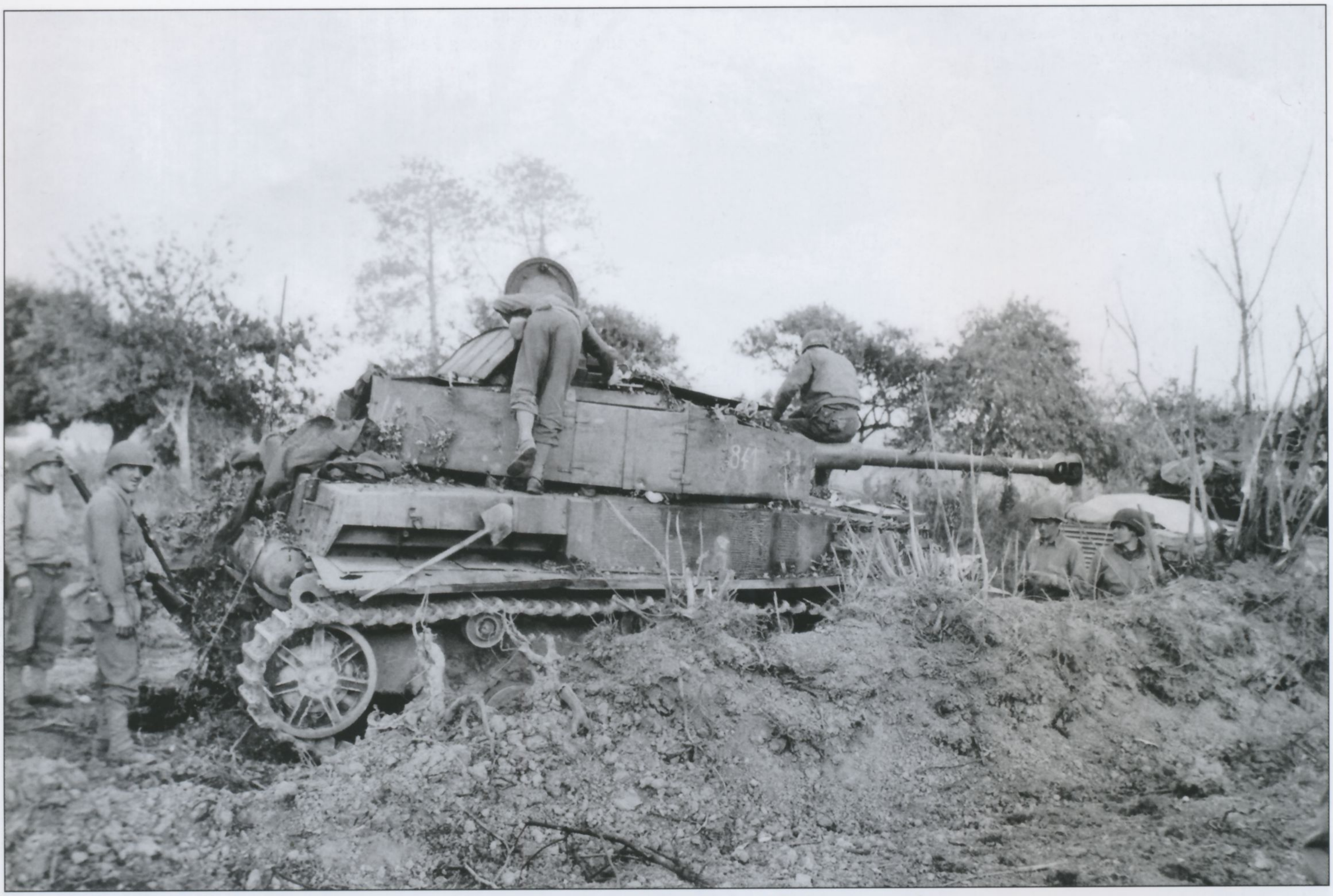
The effect of large caliber artillery projectiles could be very dramatic as seen in the case of this Pz.Kpfw.IV with its lower bow blasted open.

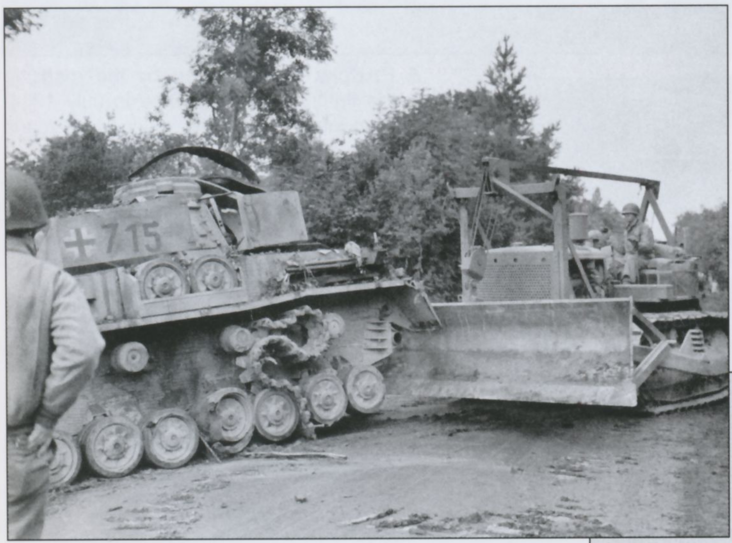


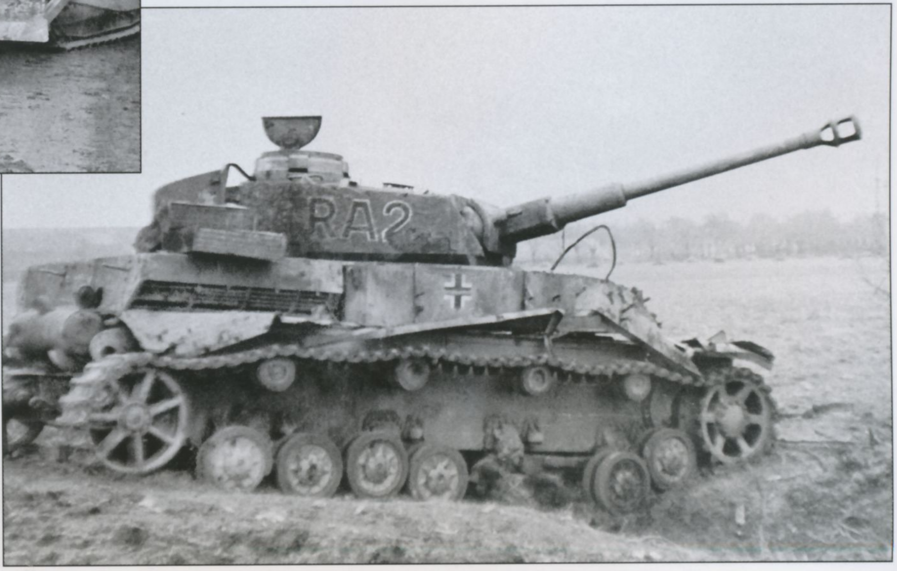
This early production Pz.Kpfw.II missing its turret was found in Germany in the spring of 1945 by the US Ninth Army, probably being used for driver training.

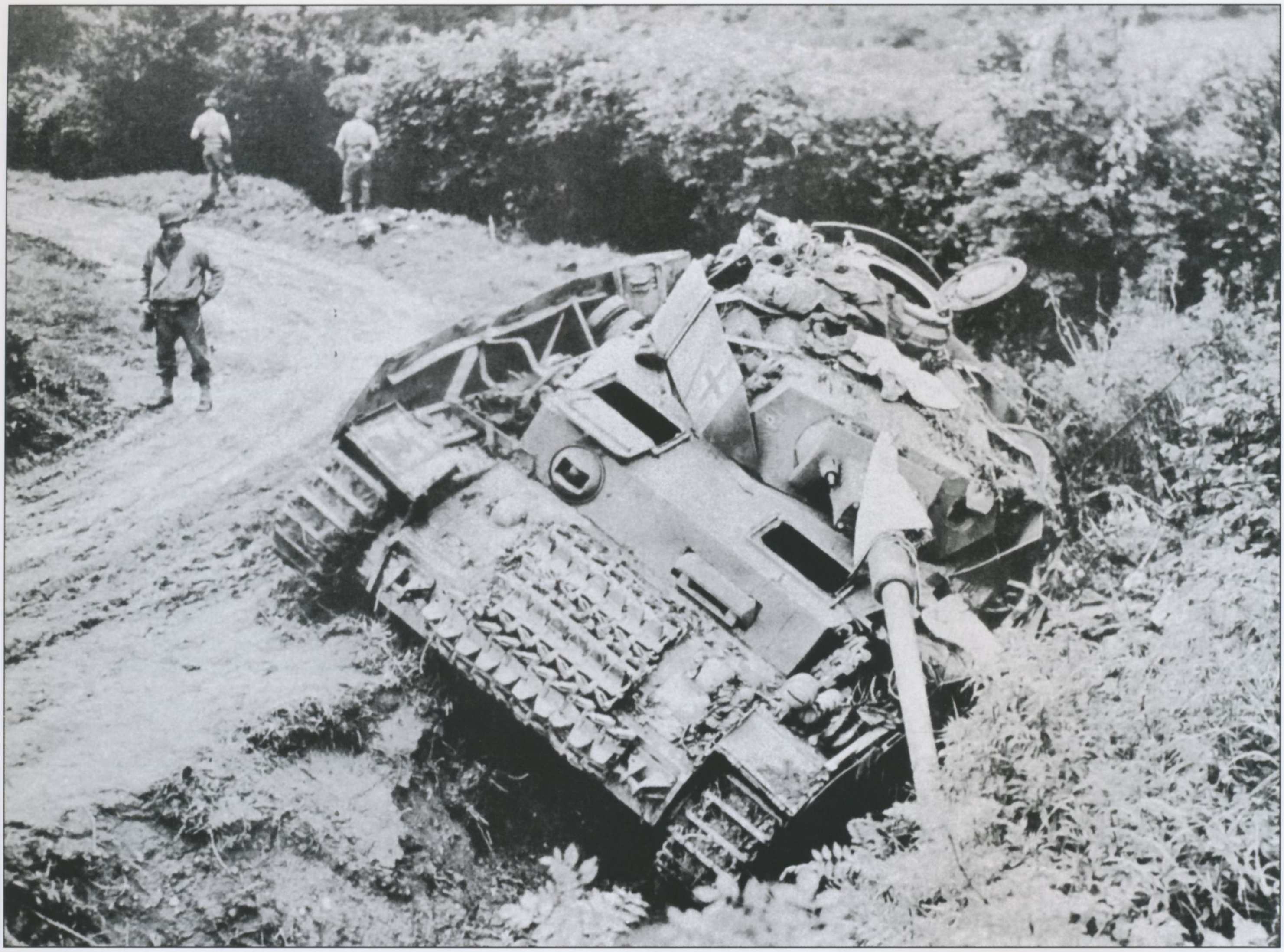


A Pz.Kpfw.IV with tactical number "841" is passed by troops of the 2nd Armored Division during the opening phase of Operation Cobra in late July 1944.

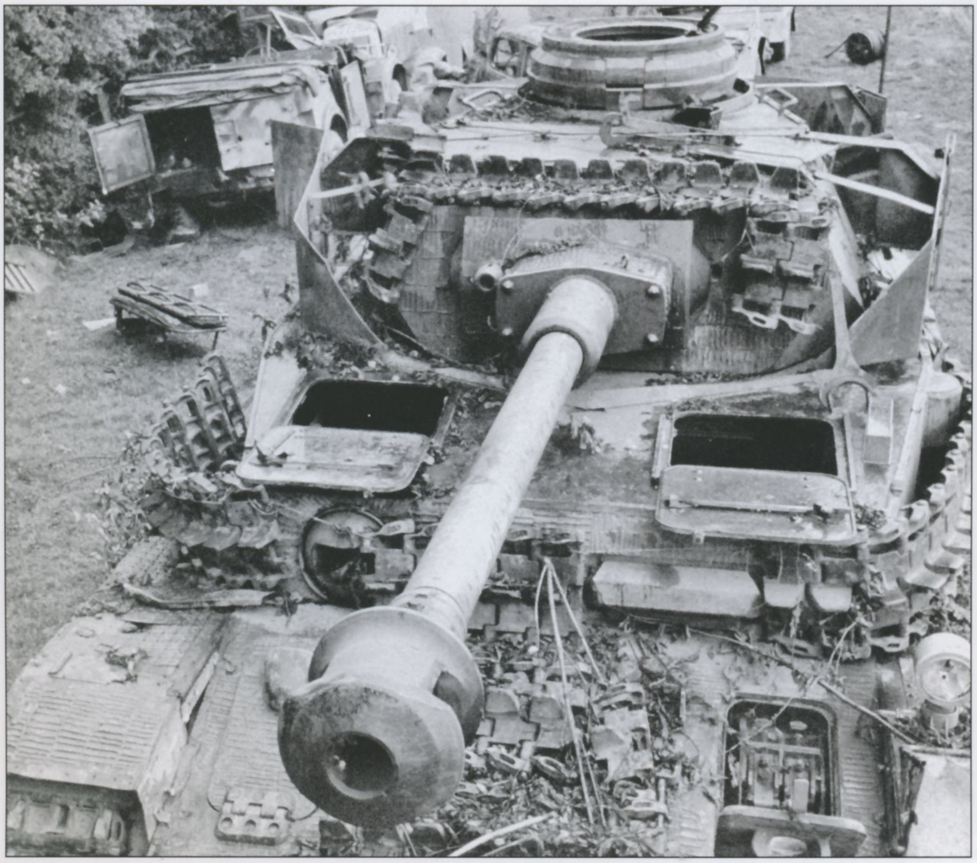

A view of the same Pz.Kpfw.IV from the opposite side as a column from the 2nd Armored Division passes by.


A US Army bulldozer pushes a wrecked Pz.Kpfw.IV off the road in the 1st Infantry Division sector during Operation Cobra in late July 1944.


This Pz.Kpfw.IV was found in the Falaise pocket in August 1944. The tactical number is not common and may indicate a tank assigned to the divisional artillery regiment.

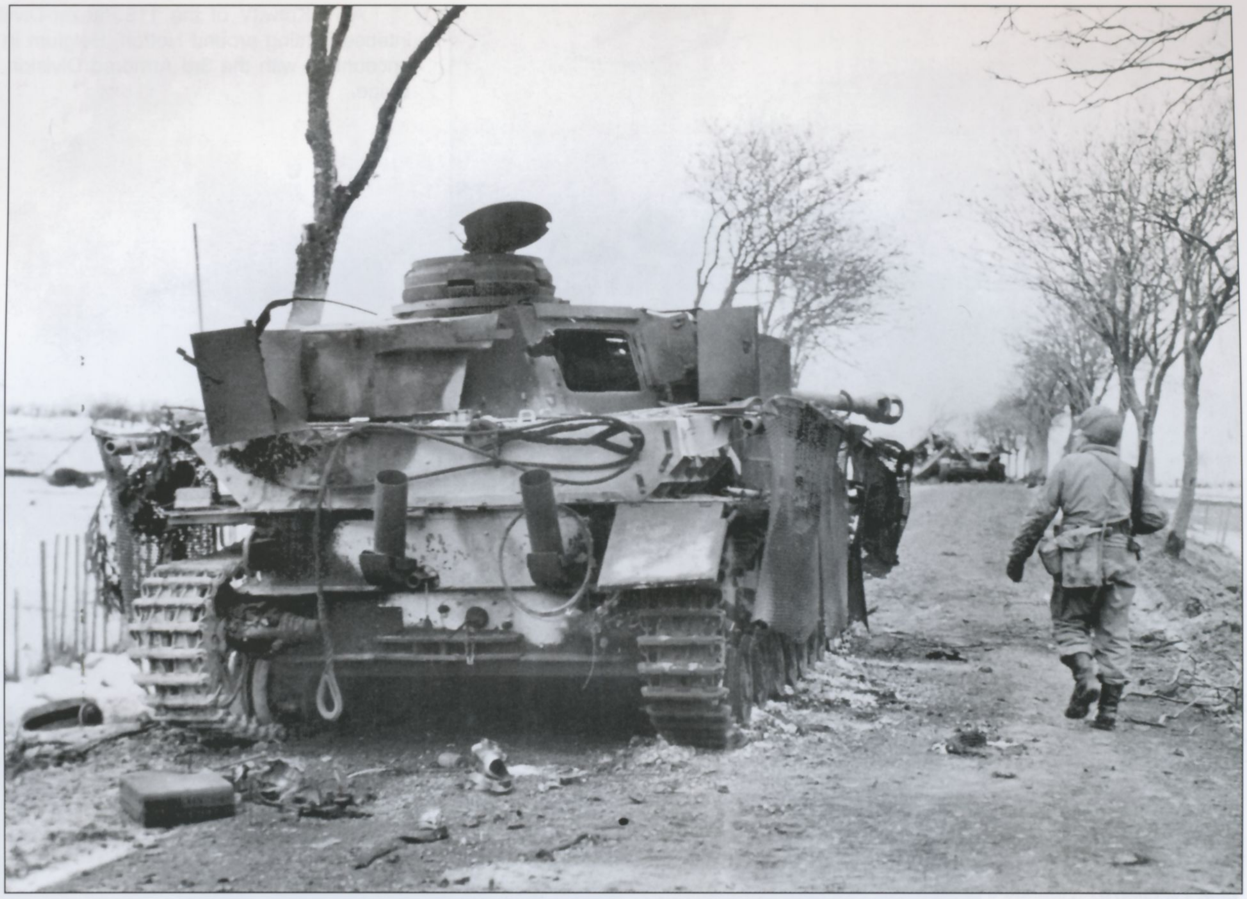


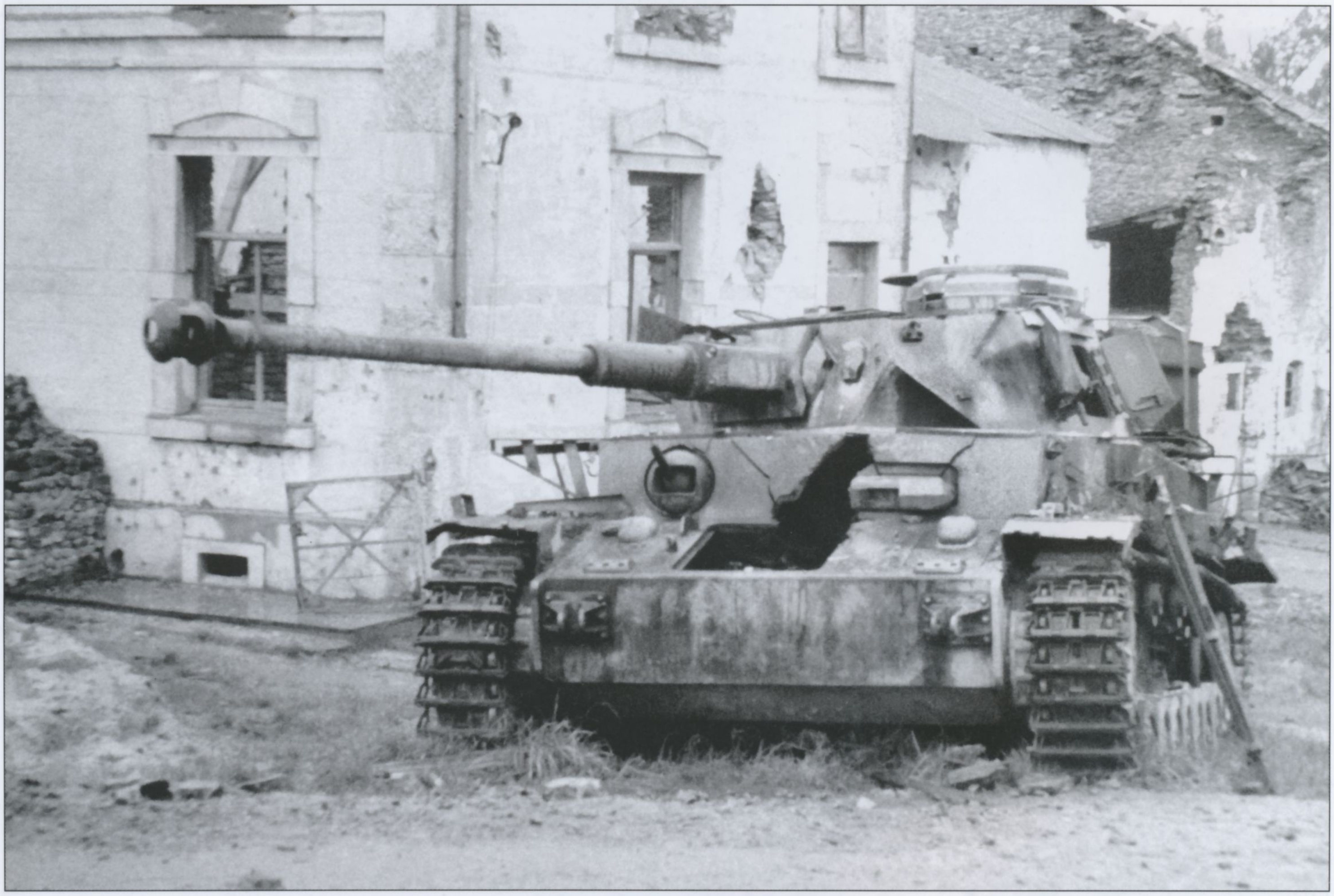
A Pz.Kpfw.IV abandoned by the roadside during the fighting in the bocage in July 1944. Often, abandoned tanks were pushed off roads to clear the path for following vehicles.



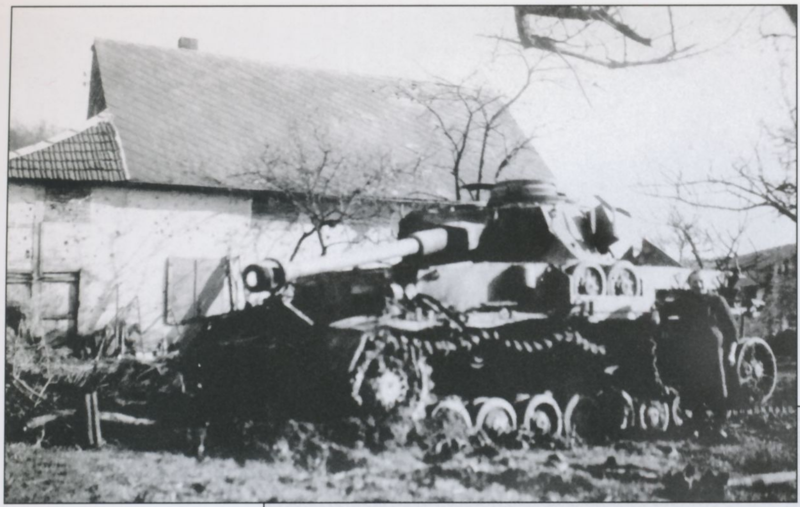
A Pz.Kpfw.IV with a substantial amount of extra tracks being used as improvised appliqué armor, and a part of a column abandoned near Sees in France in August 1944.

This Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.J from the spearhead of Kampfgruppe Peiper was knocked out by US M10 tank destroyers on the road from Bullingen to Wirtzfeld on 17 December 1944.



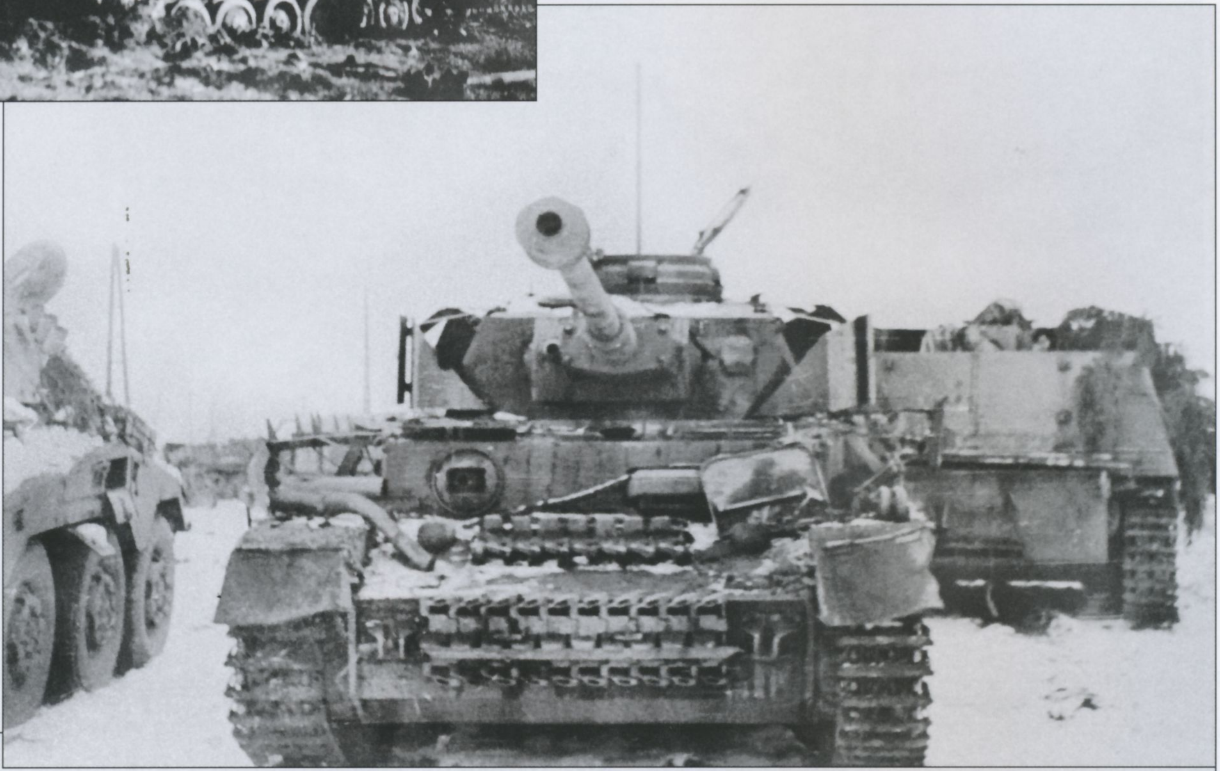


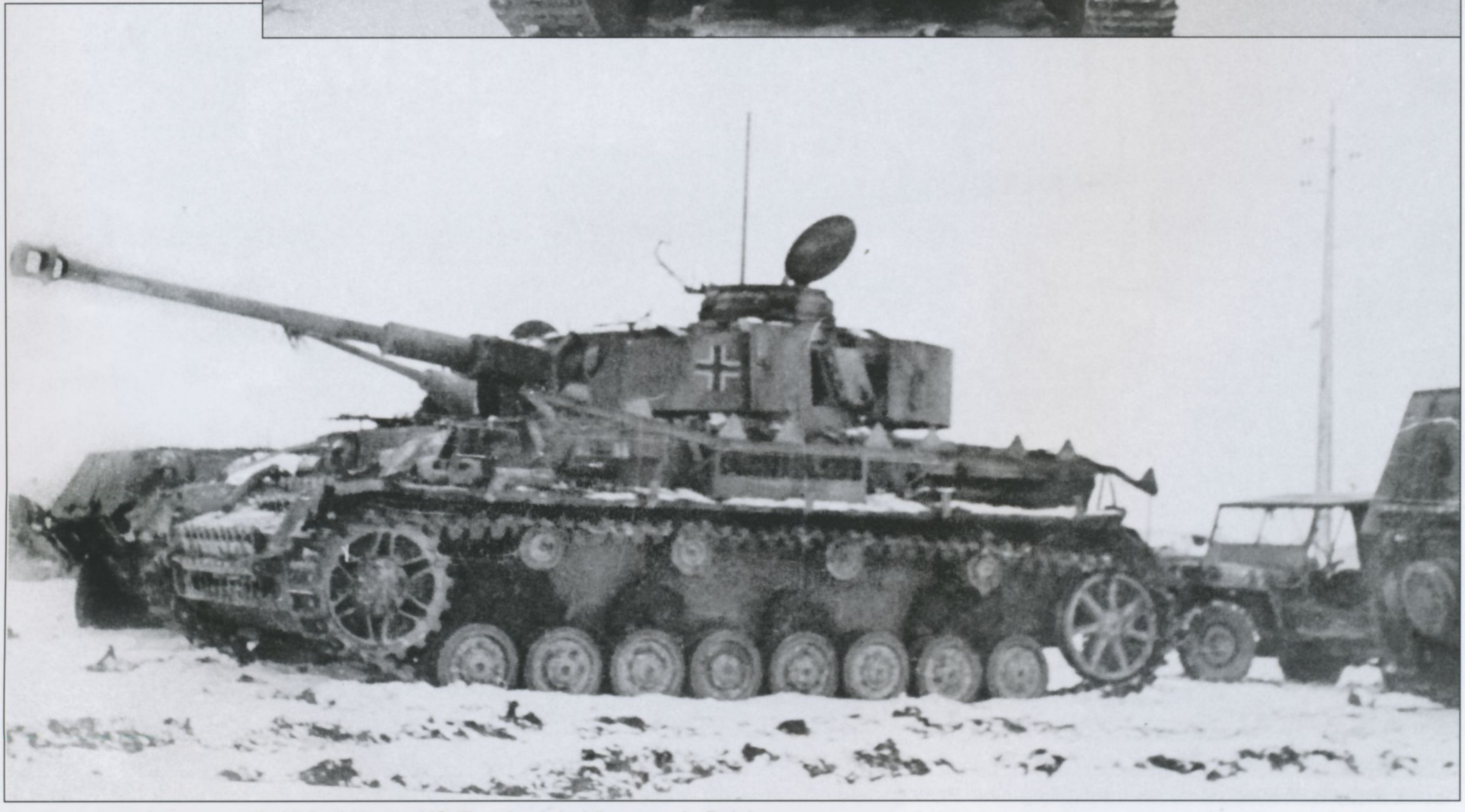
A Pz.Kpfw.IV knocked out in the fighting near Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge and photographed the following summer. It has suffered a catastrophic failure of the front armor, probably a direct hit by an artillery round.



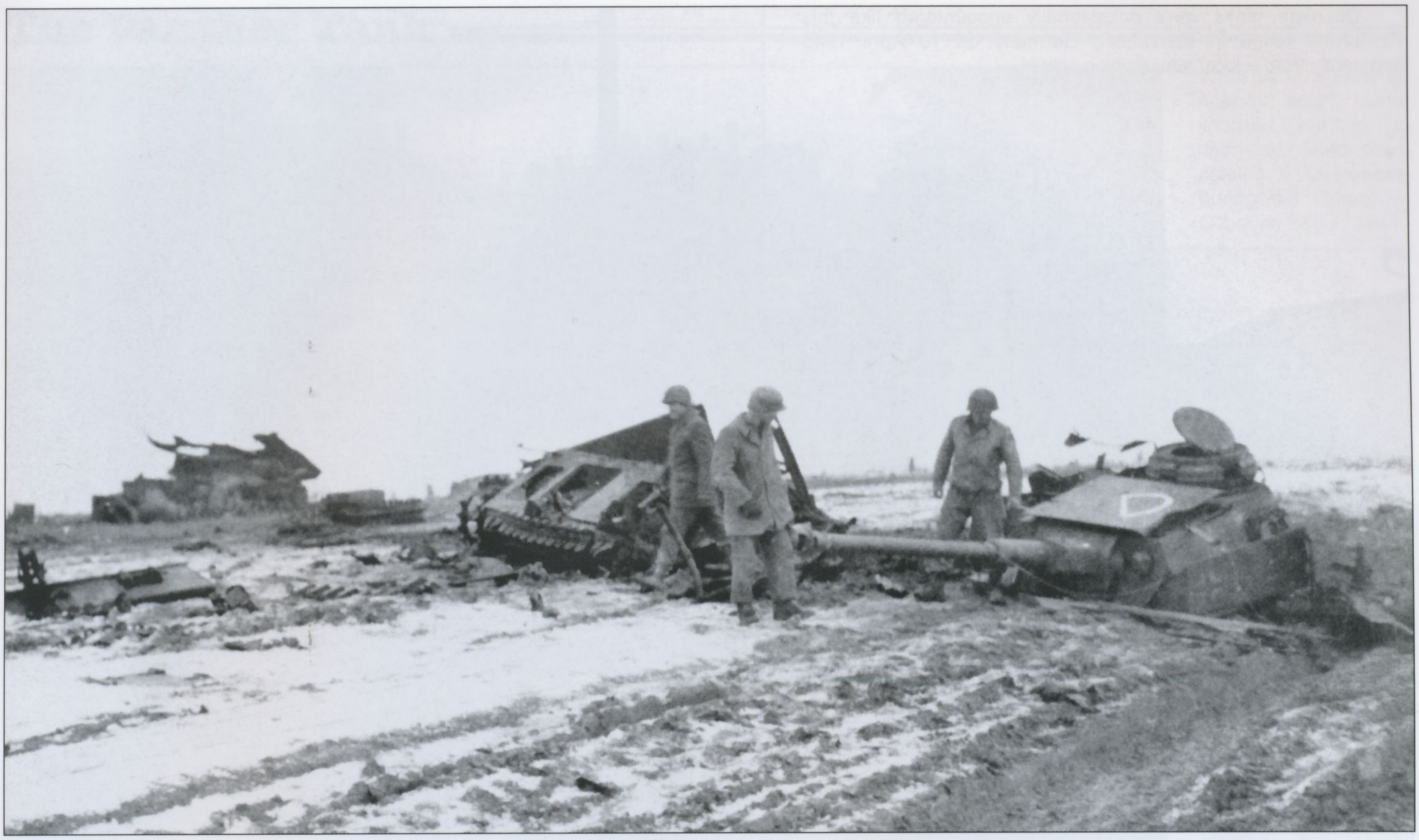
A Pz.Kpfw.IV of the 116.Panzer-Division knocked out in the intense fighting around Hotton, Belgium in late December 1944 in encounters with the 3rd Armored Division during the Battle of the Bulge.

This Pz.Kpfw.IV was photographed in a holding area in Belgium by the US First Army and is probably from the vehicles abandoned by Kampfgruppe Peiper near La Gleize.

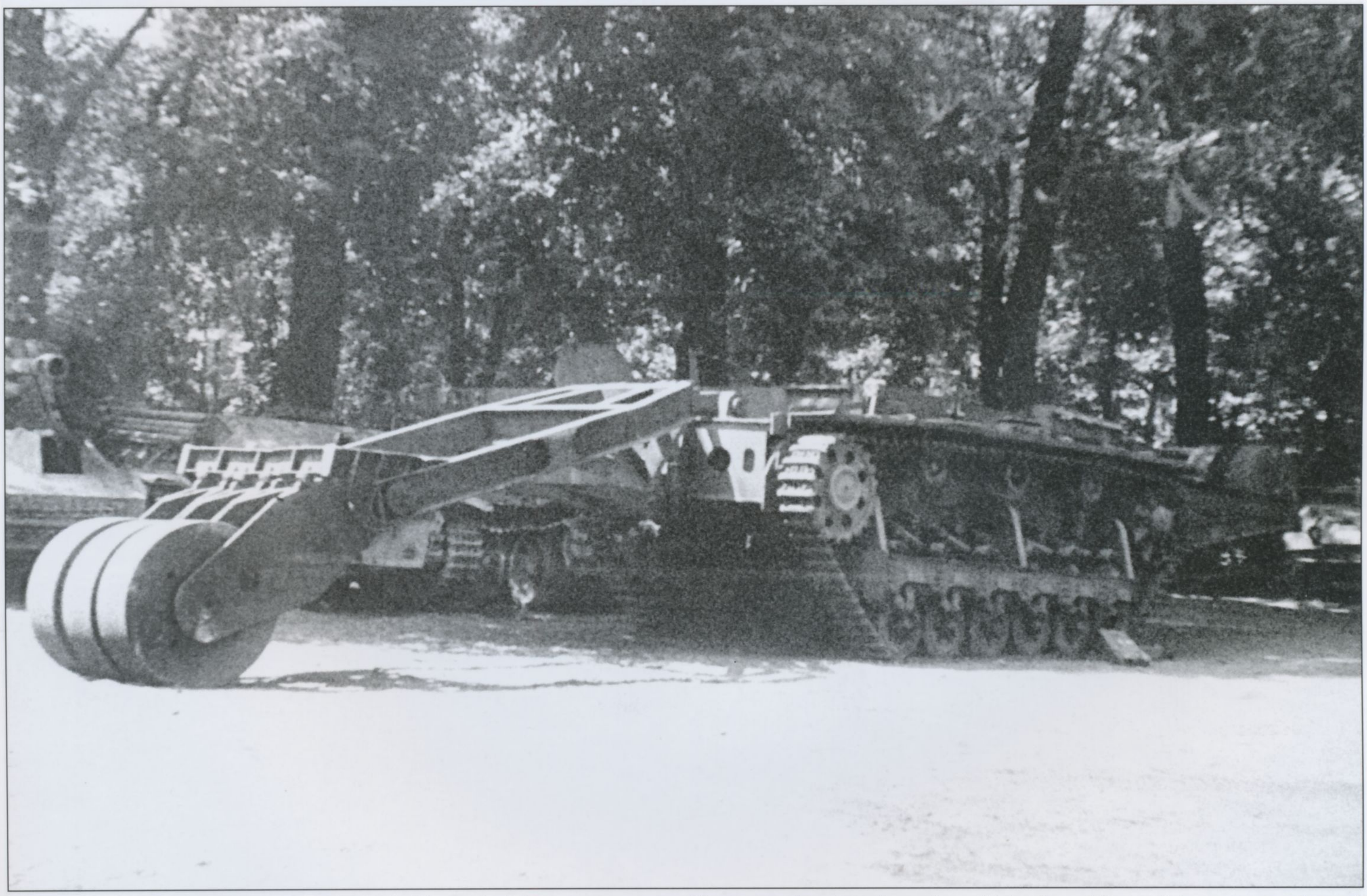




Another view of the same Pz.Kpfw.IV in the US First Army holding area in Belgium.

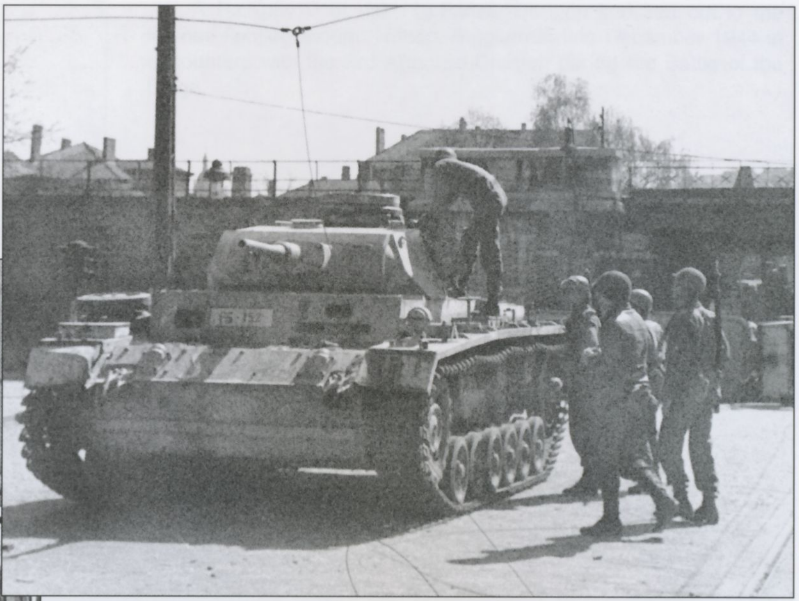


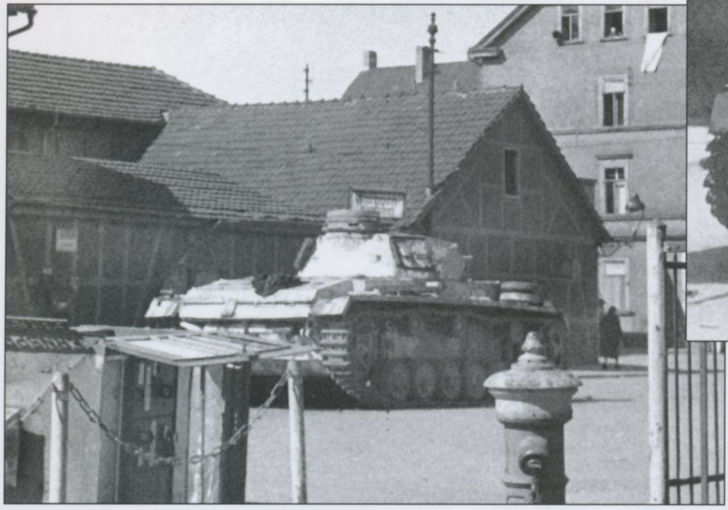
US engineers from the 102nd Division blow up derelict German tanks to prevent their recovery near Apweiler, Germany on 6 January 1945. The turret of the Pz.Kpfw.IV to the right seems to have a panel of appliqué armor on the roof.



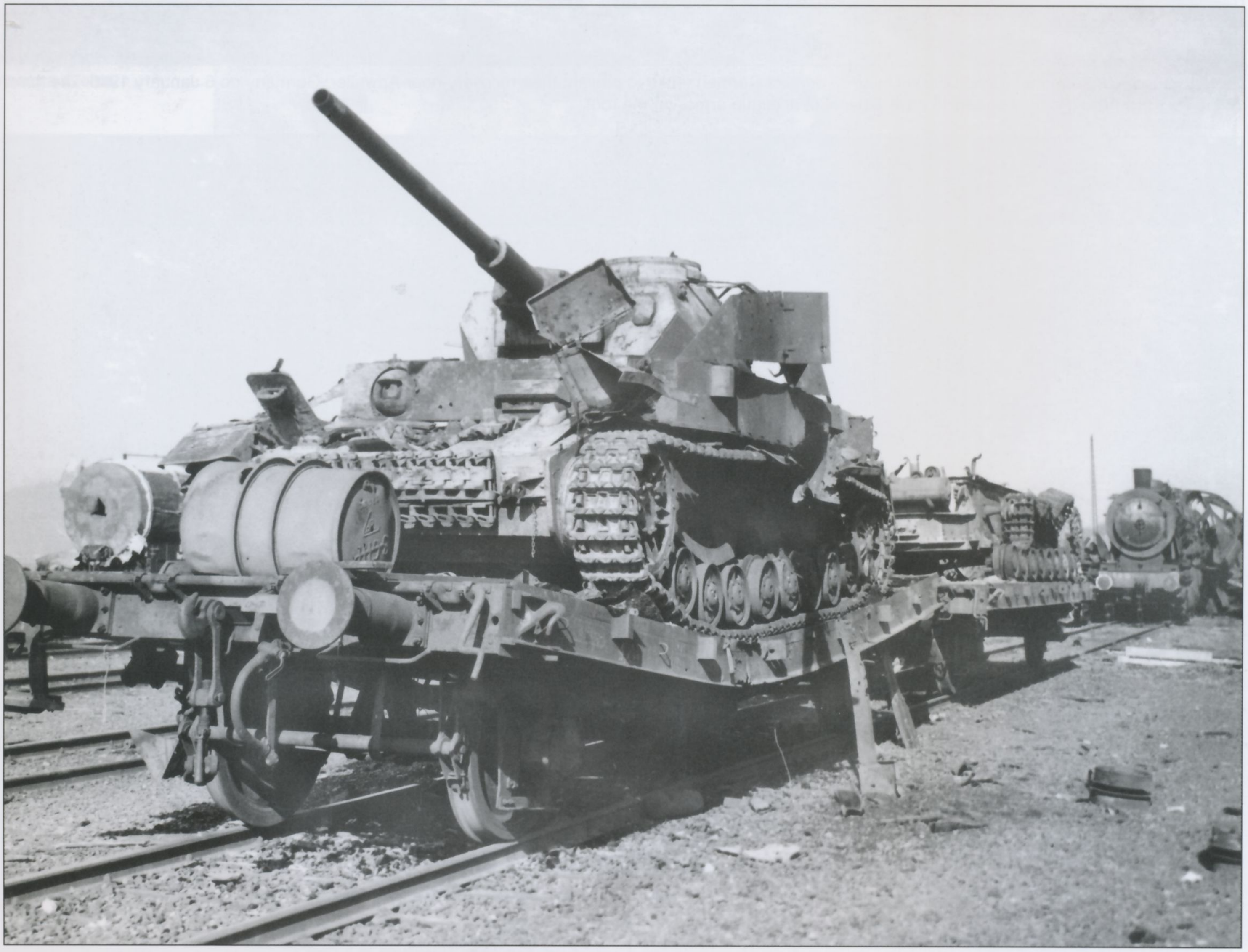
One of the rarer versions of the Pz.Kpfw.III was the Minenraumerpanzer III, an experimental mine-roller vehicle. One of the prototypes is seen here at a US Army ordnance holding area near Paris.

Obsolete tanks were occasionally encountered like this Pz.Kpfw.III found in Eisenbach, Germany on 10 April 1945 apparently from a local tank training school.

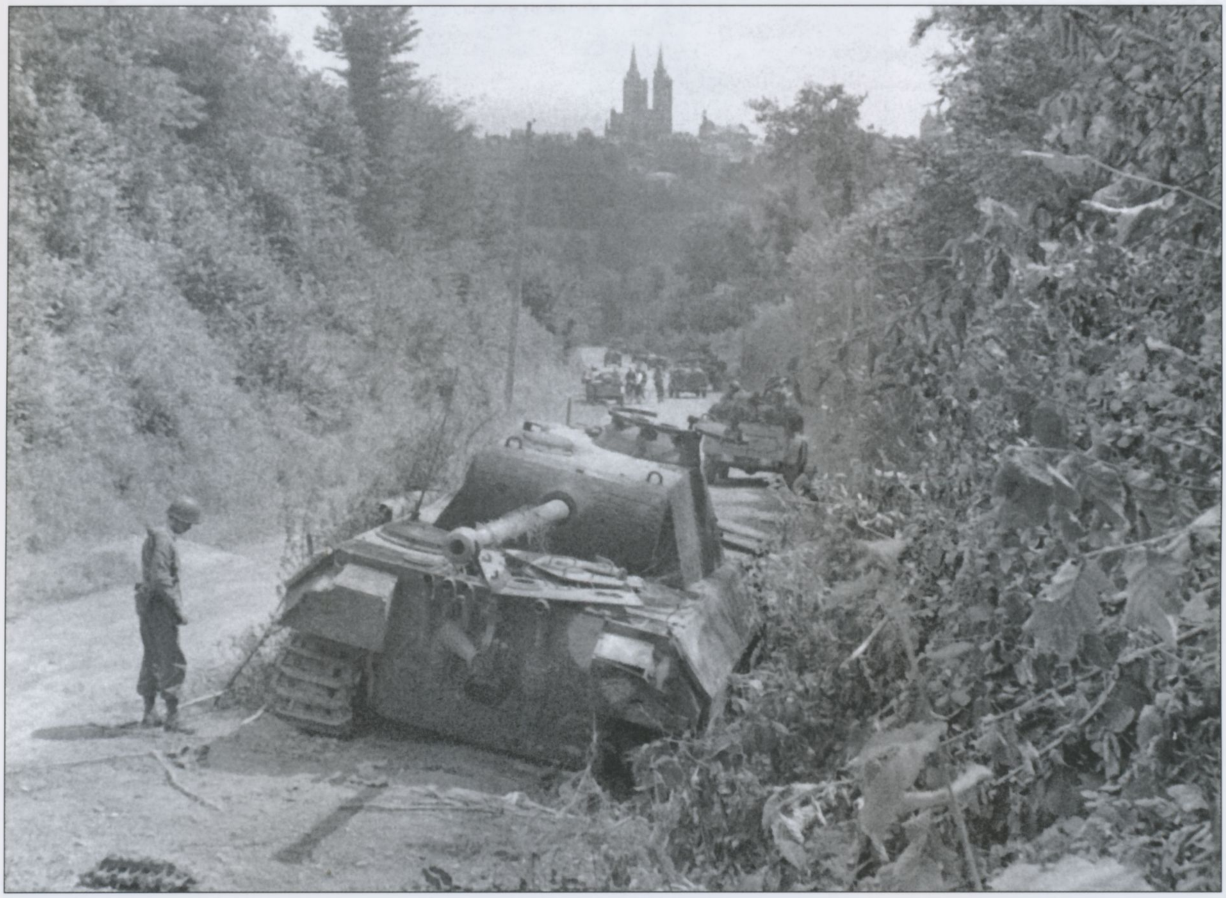




Another view of the Pz.Kpfw.III found in Eisenbach in April 1945.

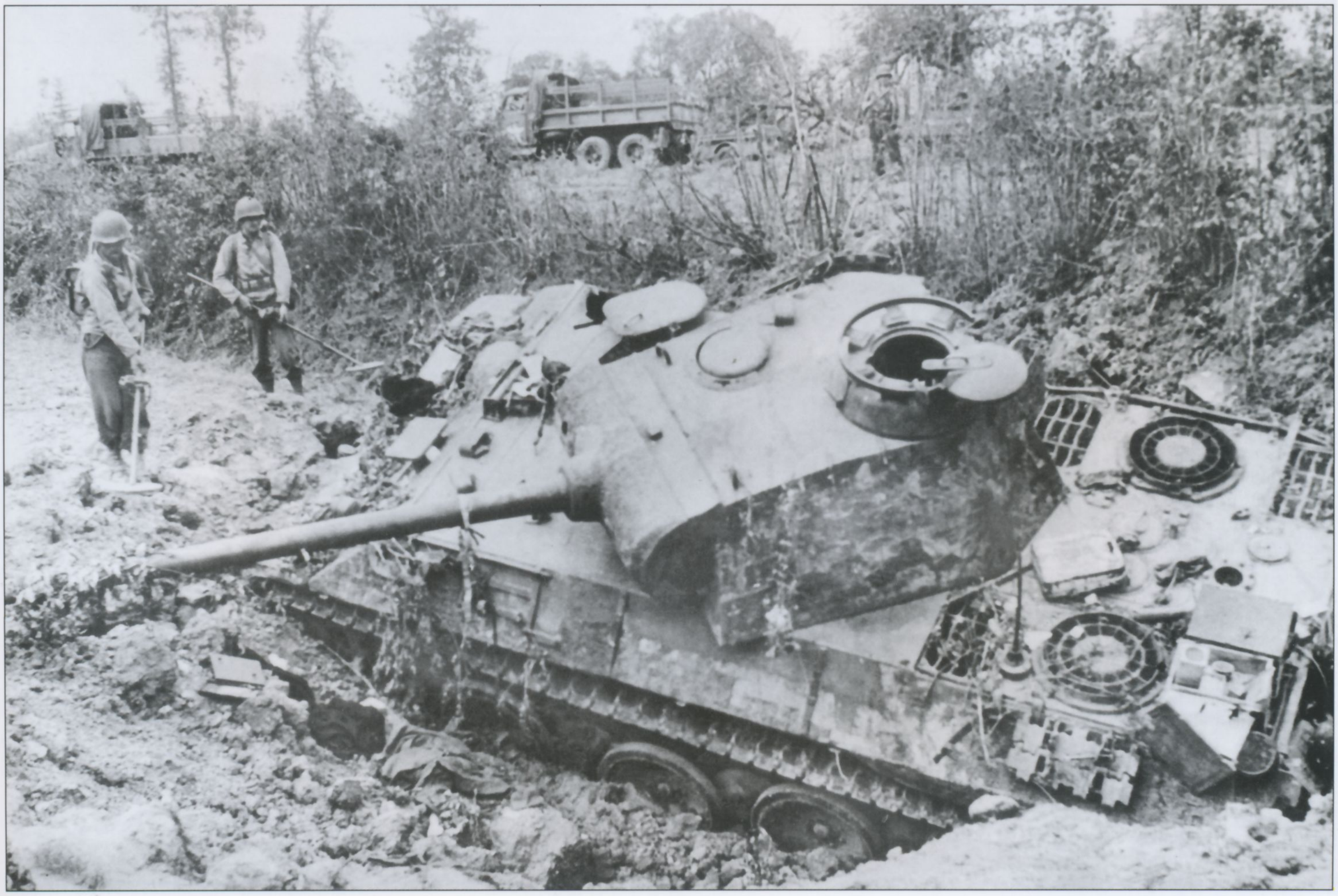


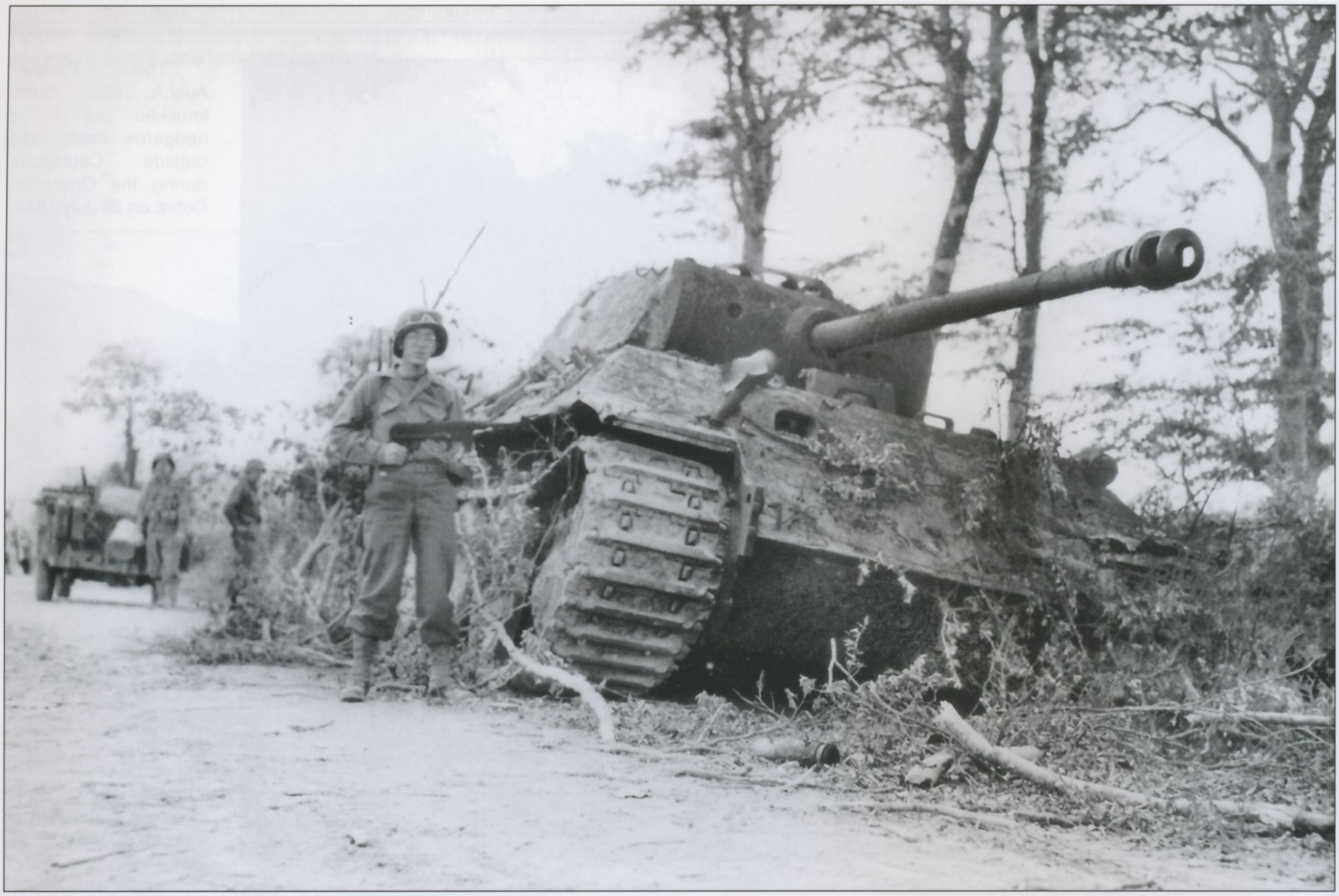
A pair of Pz.Kpfw.IV knocked out on their rail transport in the Nennig rail yard and found by troops of Patton's Third Army in 1945. The second tank has had its superstructure blown away.



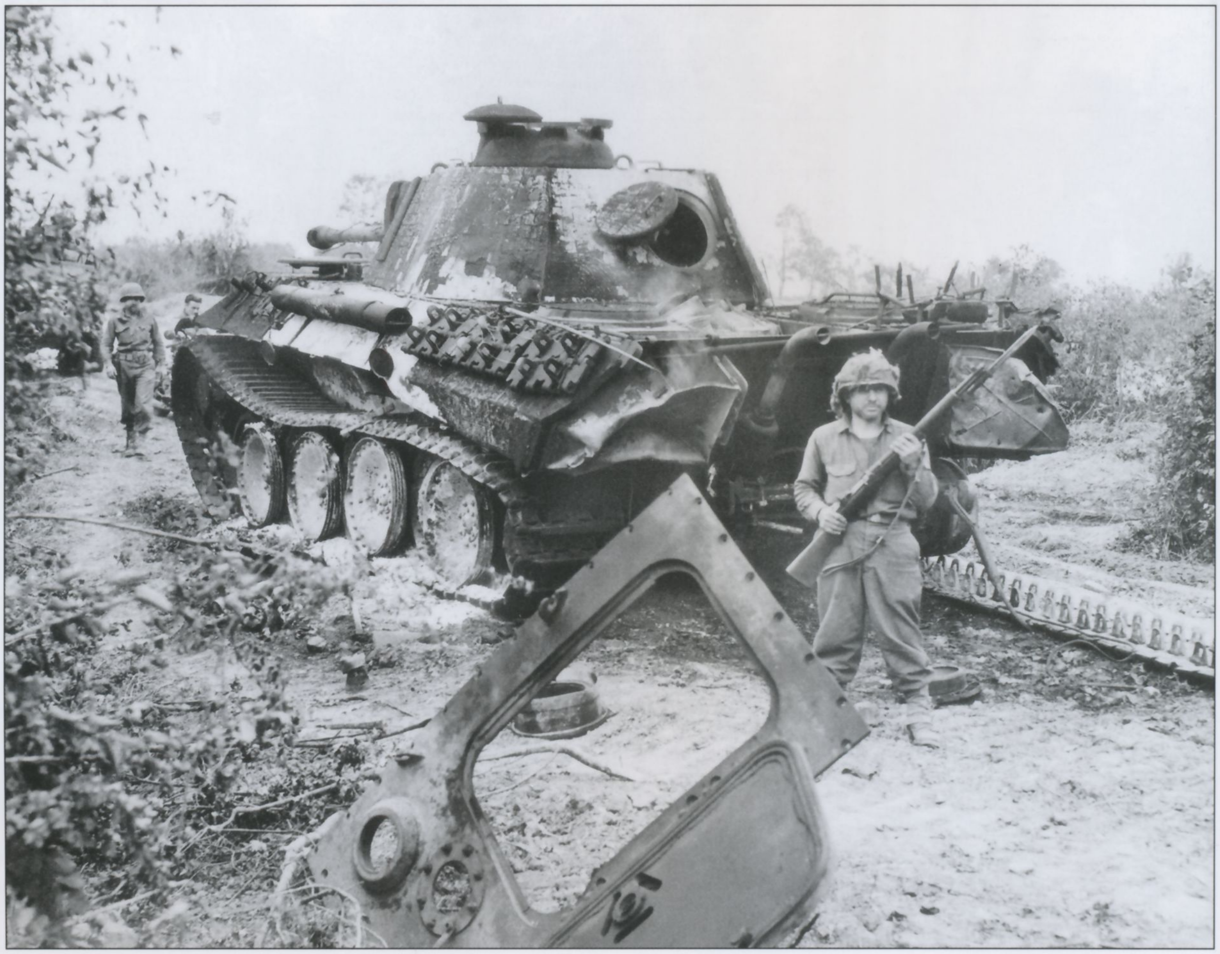
This Panther Ausf.A was found knocked out in a hedgerow lined road outside Coutances during the Operation Cobra on 28 July 1944.

The surviving Panthers of Panzer Lehr Division were blasted by carpet bombing at the start of Operation Cobra on 25 July 1944.

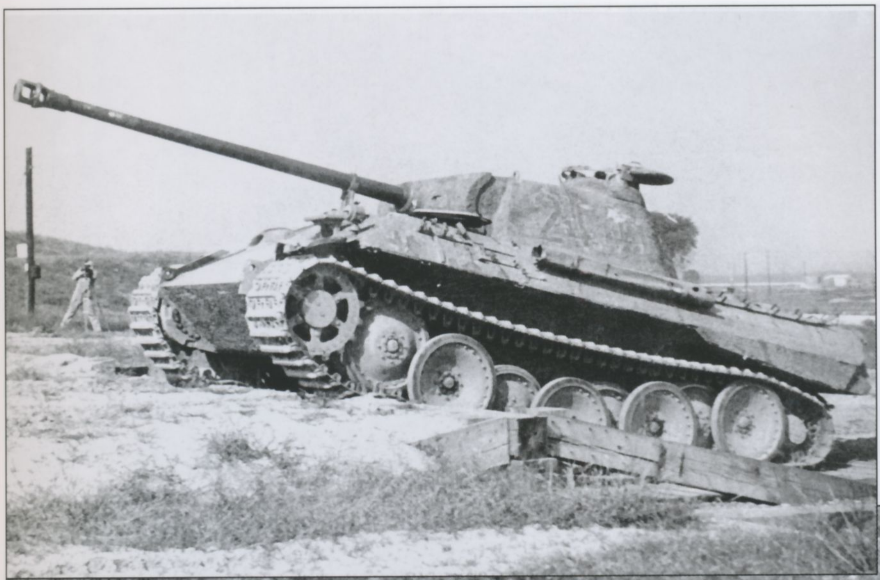




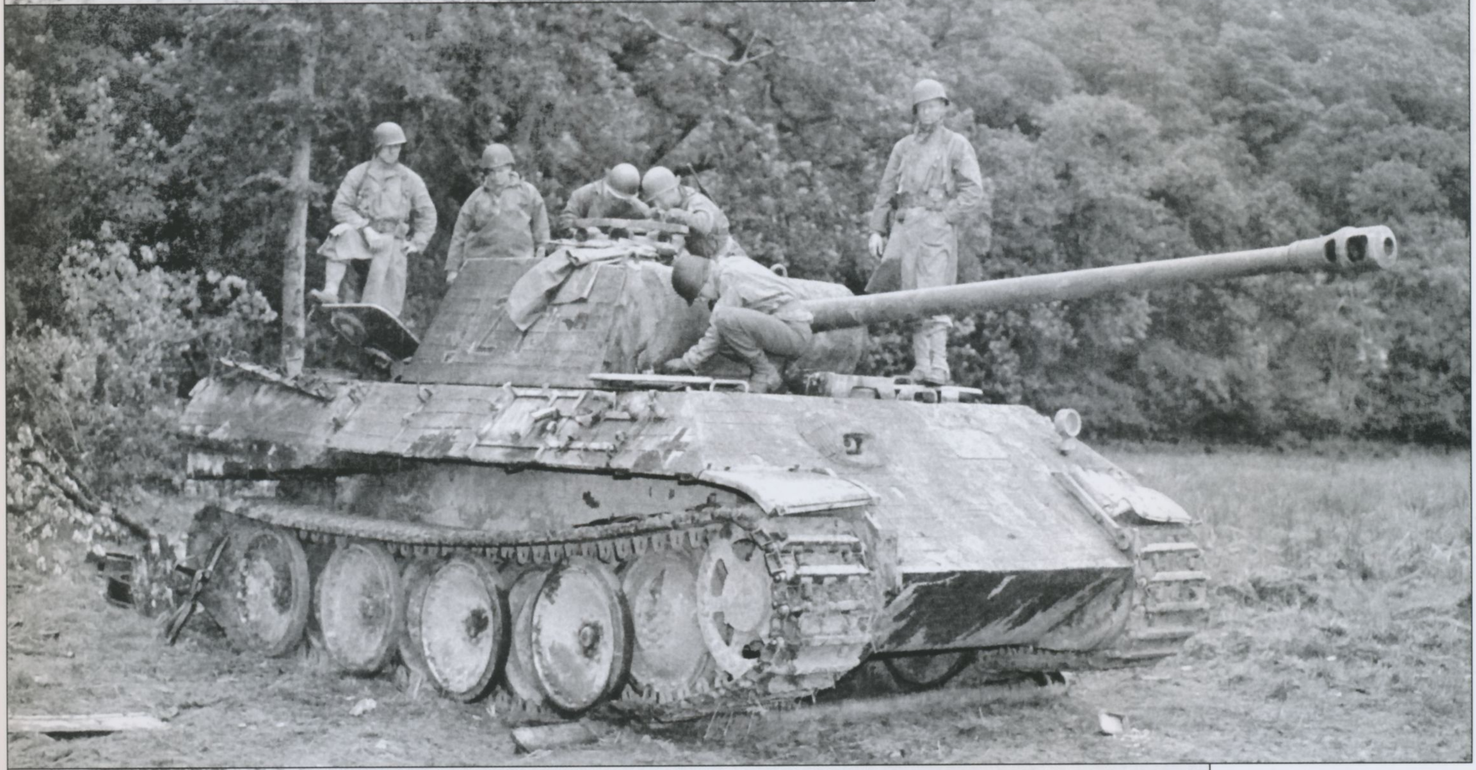
A GI poses in front of another of the Panzer Lehr Division Panthers knocked out at the start of Operation Cobra.



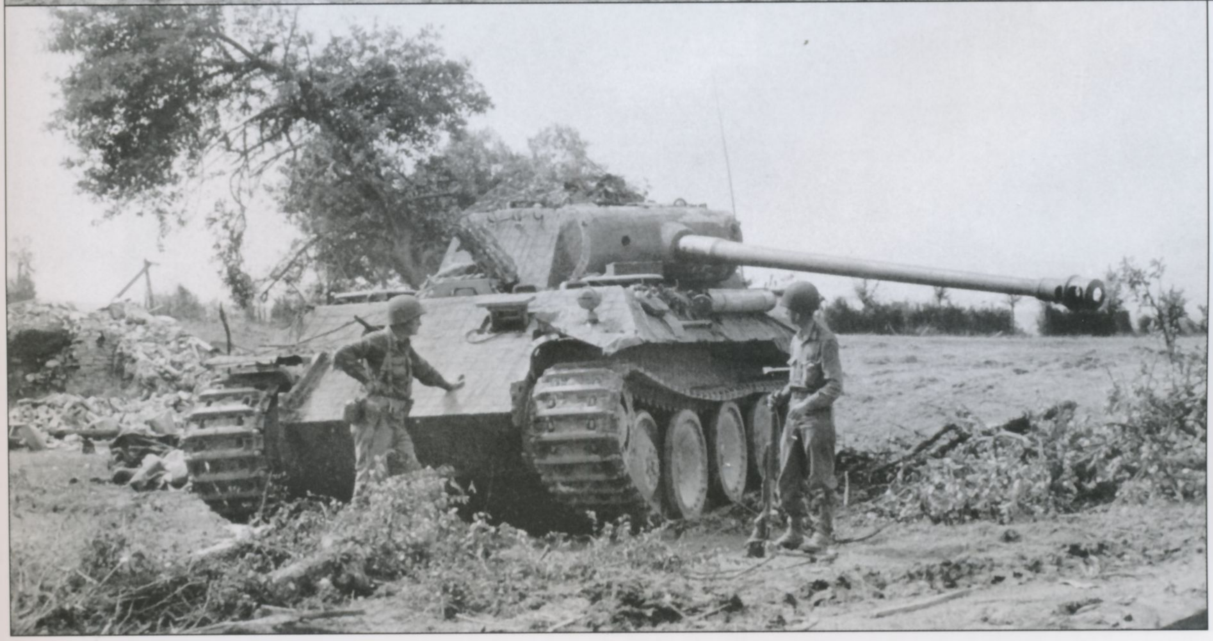
The Panzer Lehr Division had only about 16 Panther tanks operational when Operation Cobra started, and by the end of the campaign had none. This is another victim of the preliminary air bombardment.



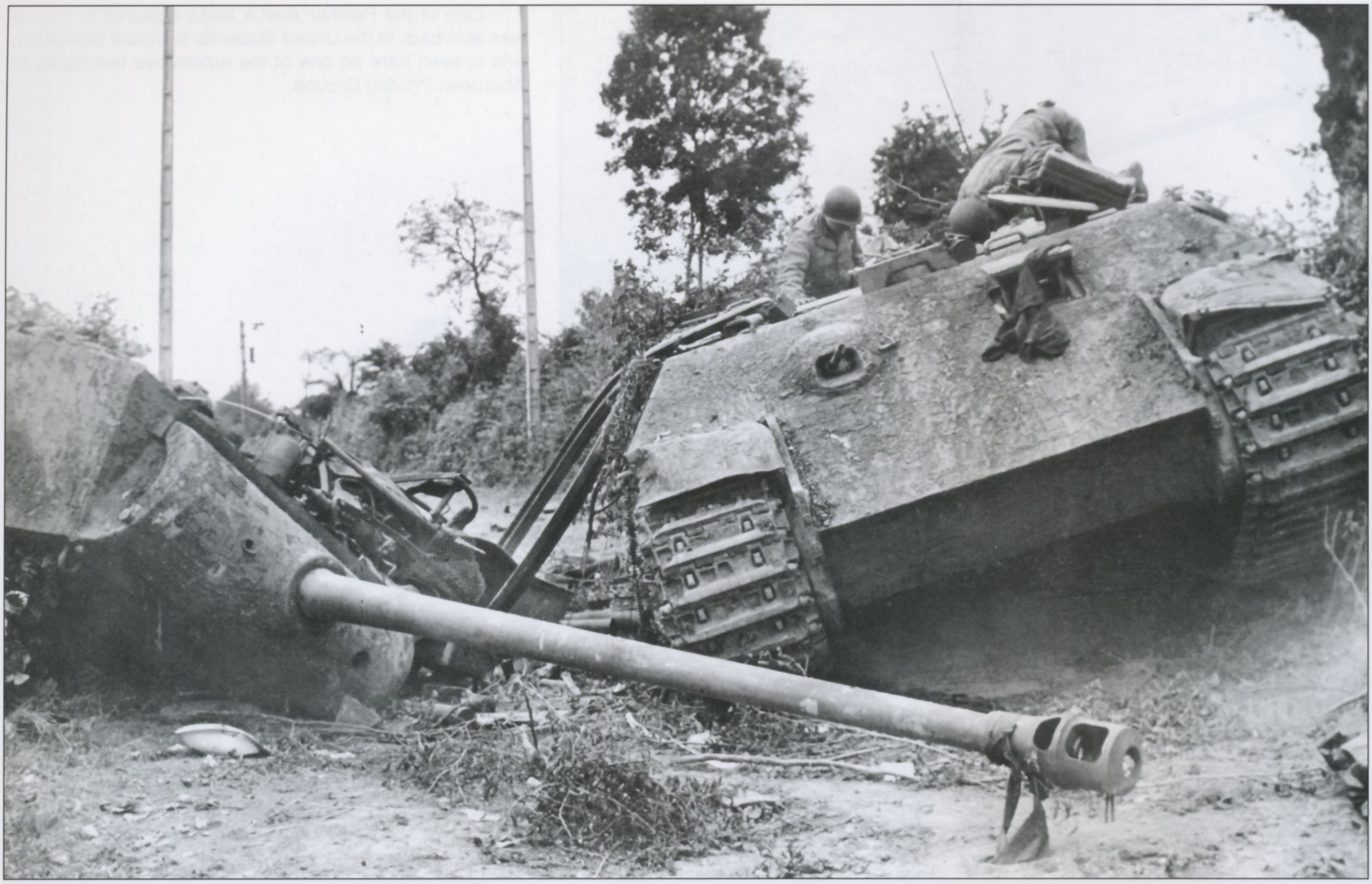
One of the Panther Ausf.A tanks captured in France was sent back to the United States for technical evaluation, and is seen here on one of the automotive test tracks at Aberdeen Proving Ground.



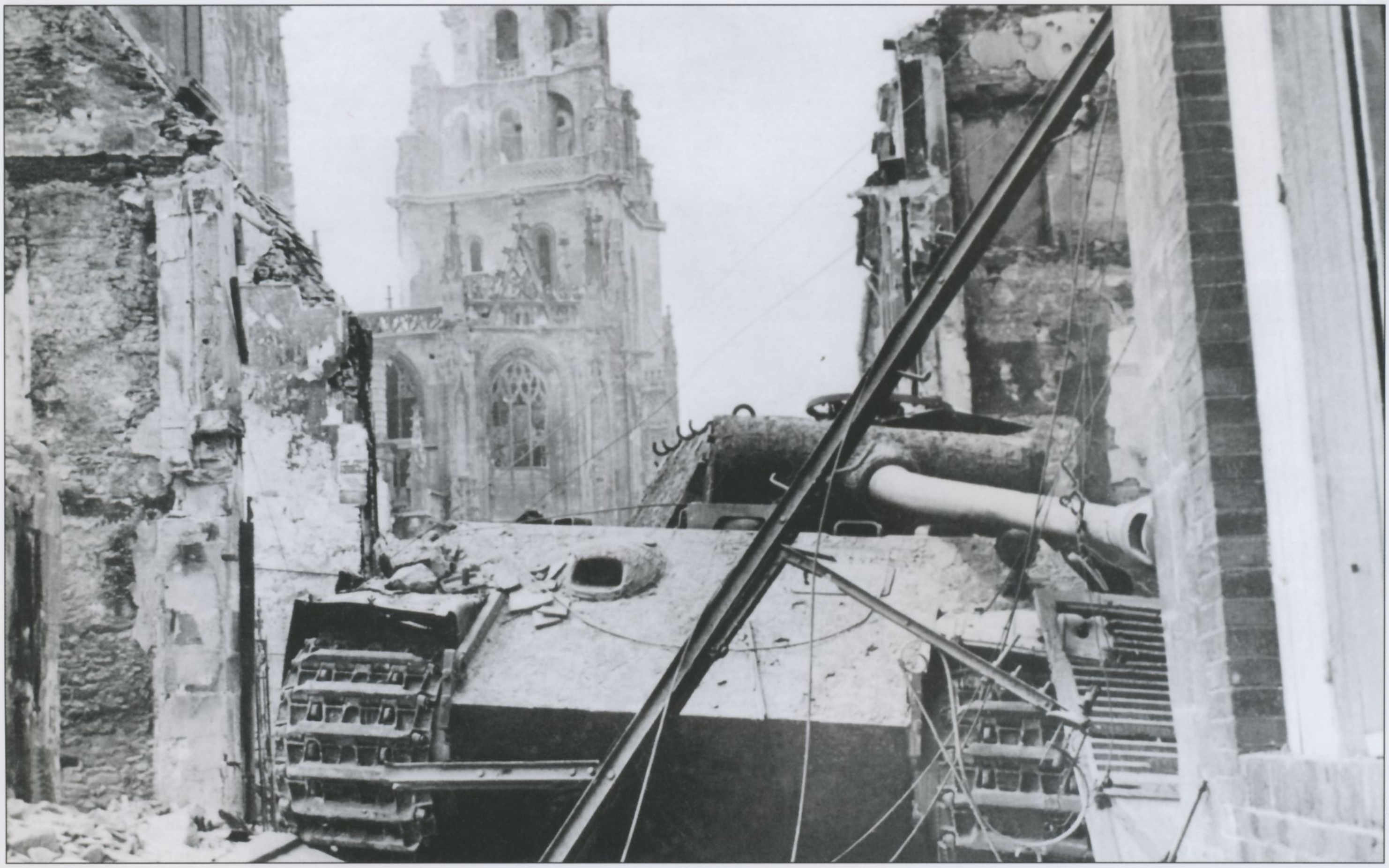
A 2.Panzer-Division Panther Ausf.A is examined by US troops after its capture in August 1944. The division's characteristic trident emblem is painted on the turret side in front of the tactical numbers.



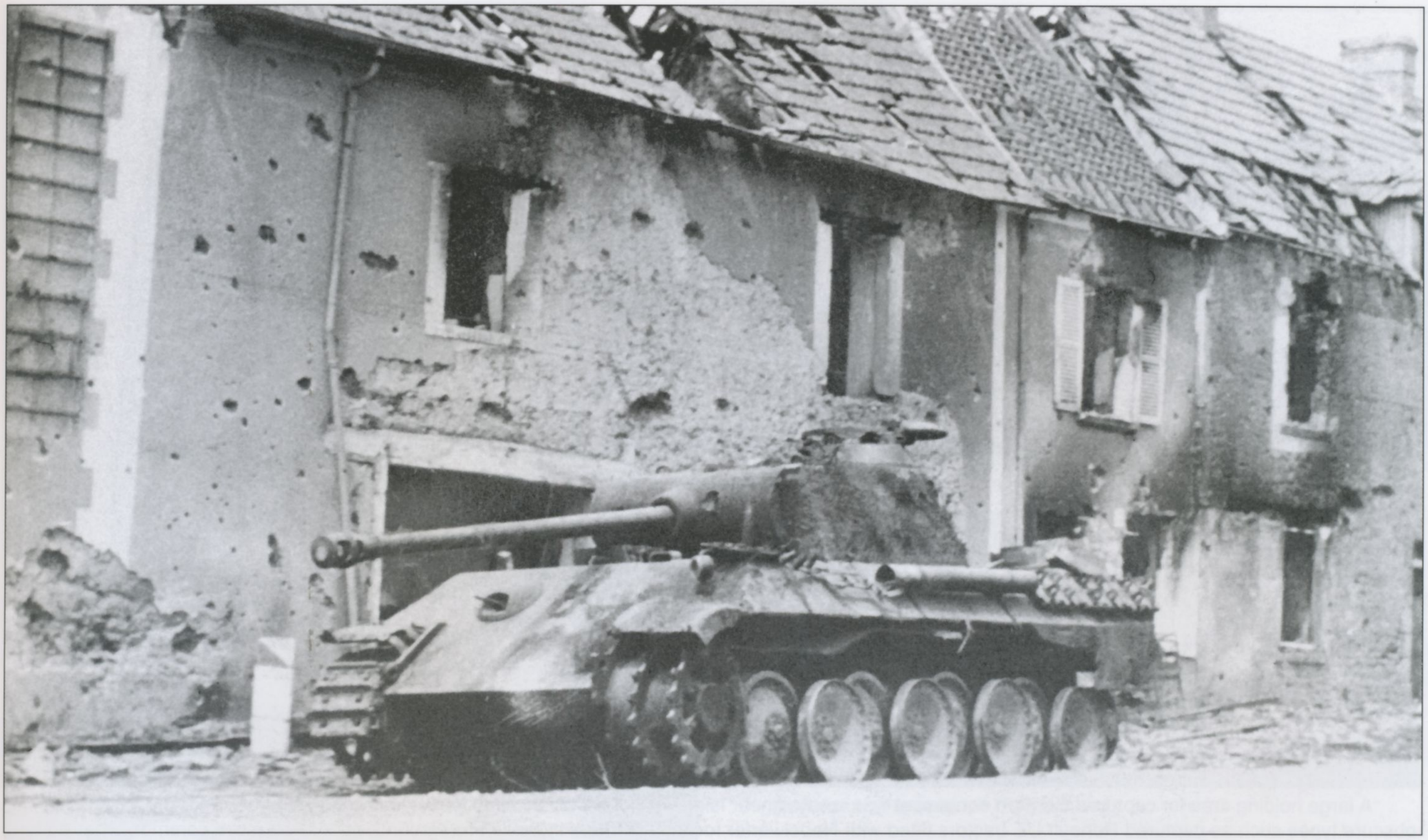
GIs inspect a Panther Ausf.A of I/Pz.Rgt.33, 9.Panzer-Division knocked out on the road between Argentan and Chambois during the fighting in August 1944.



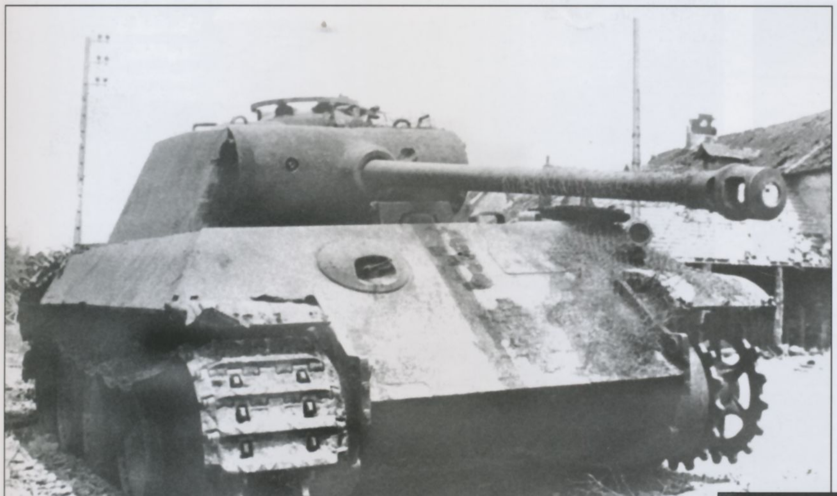
GIs inspect a Panther which lost its turret during the fighting around Coutances in August 1944.



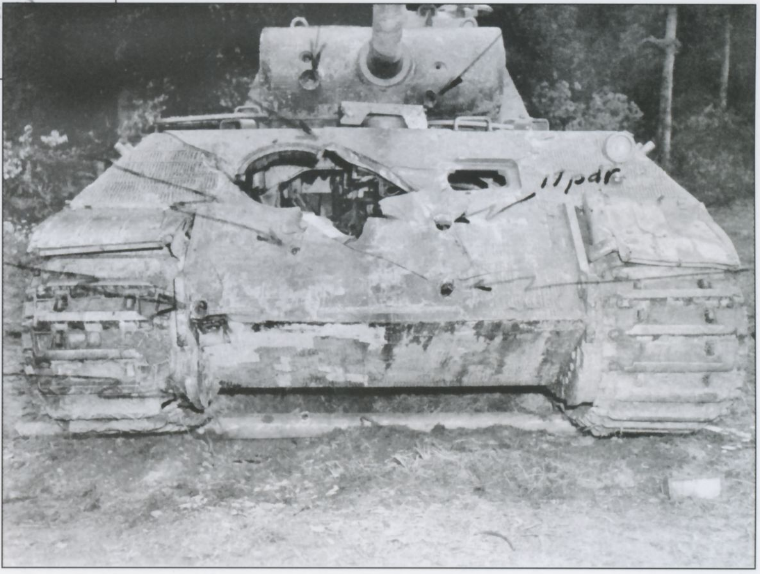
A Panther of II/Pz.Rgt.33, 9.Panzer-Division knocked out by artillery of the 5th Armored Division on rue de la Poterie in Argentan during the fighting there in August 1944.



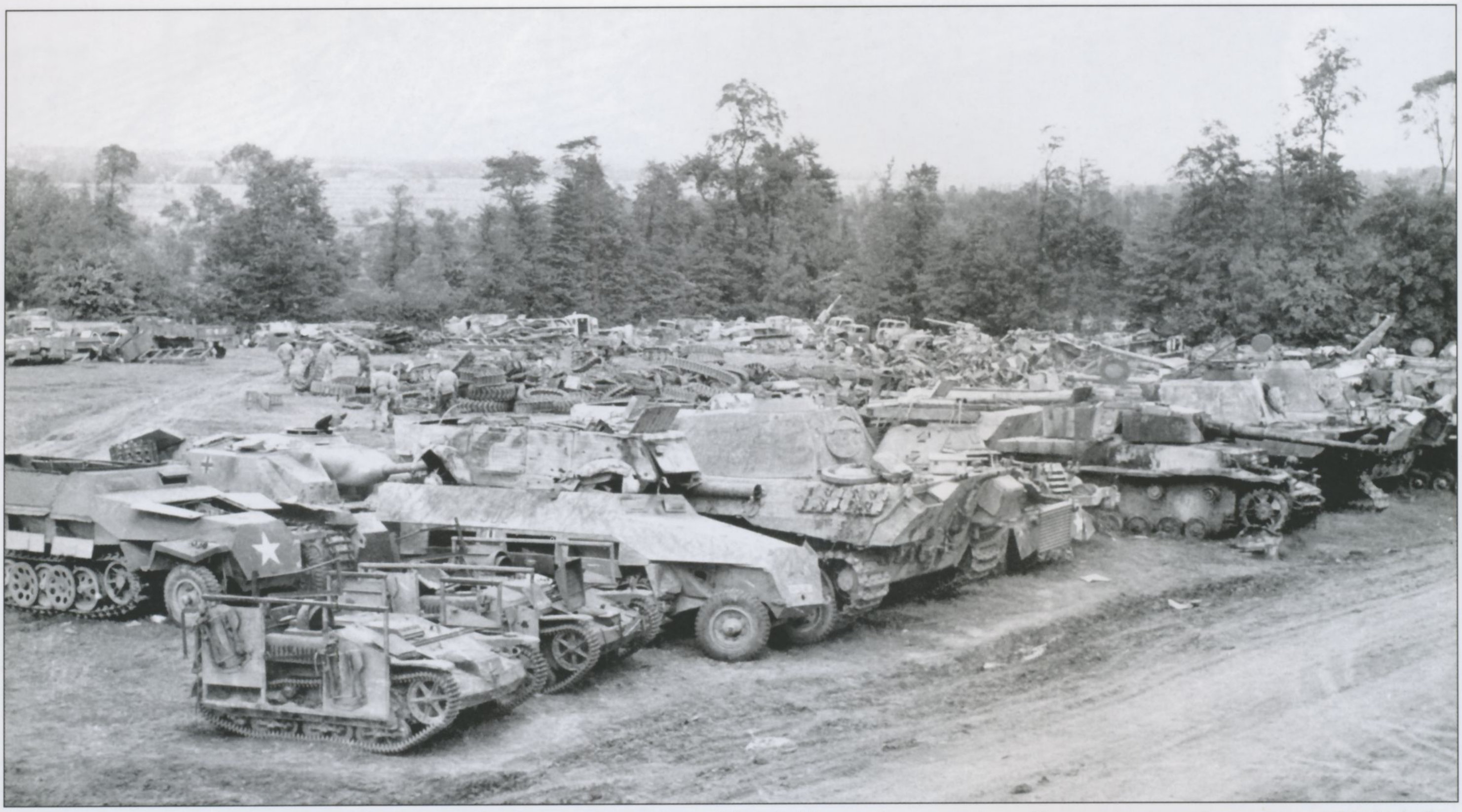
A Panther knocked out by the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion near Raids during the fighting in France in August 1944.



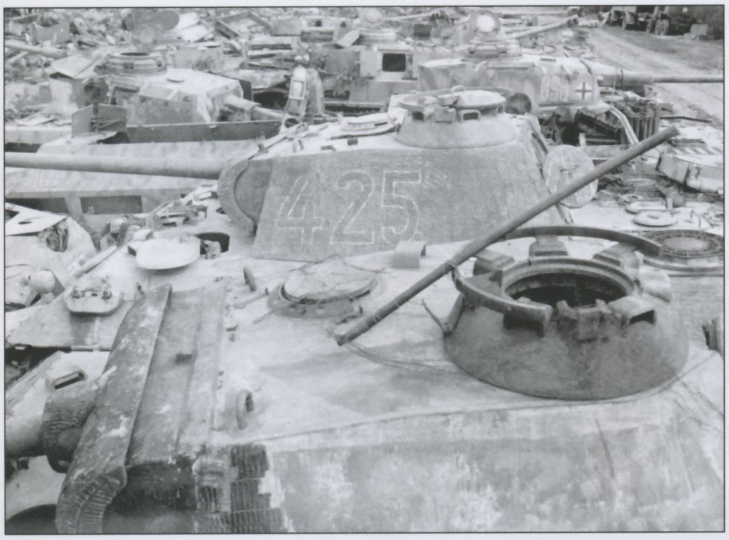
Another view of a Panther knocked out in Raids by the 704th Tank Battalion while defending a key road junction.



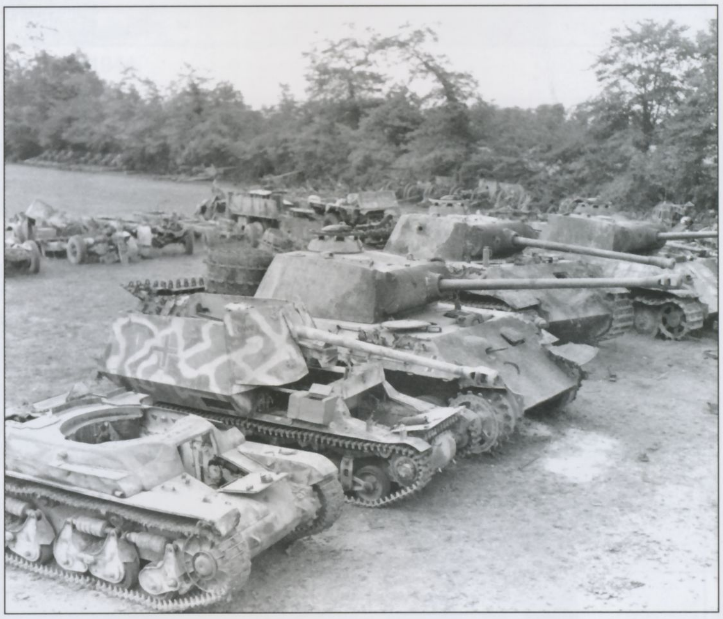
The armored protection of the Panther proved to be something of a shock to the Allies when encountered in France in the summer of 1944. A series of tests were conducted against captured Panthers to determine the effectiveness of various Allied weapons. This is a photo from one of the reports showing the results of trials against one of three captured Panthers conducted near Isigny in August 1944.



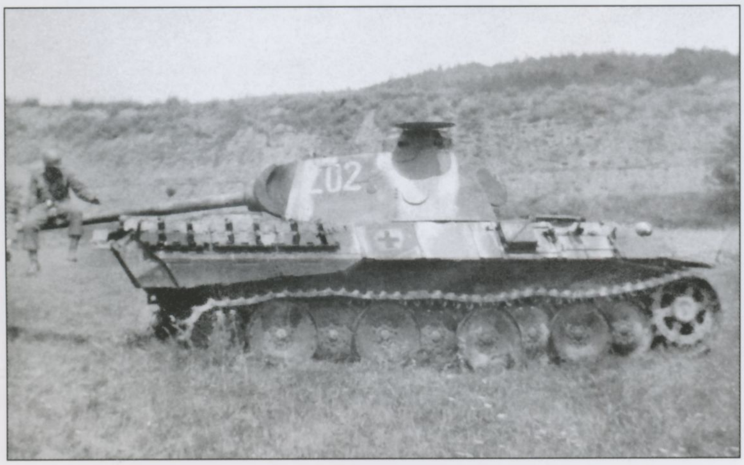
A large holding area for captured German equipment was created near Isigny in Normandy as seen here. Numerous types of armor are visible including obscure types such as captured Renault UE tractors fitted with Nebelwerfer rocket launchers in the left foreground, as well as more common types such as Panthers, StuG III, and Sd.Kfz.251 half-tracks.



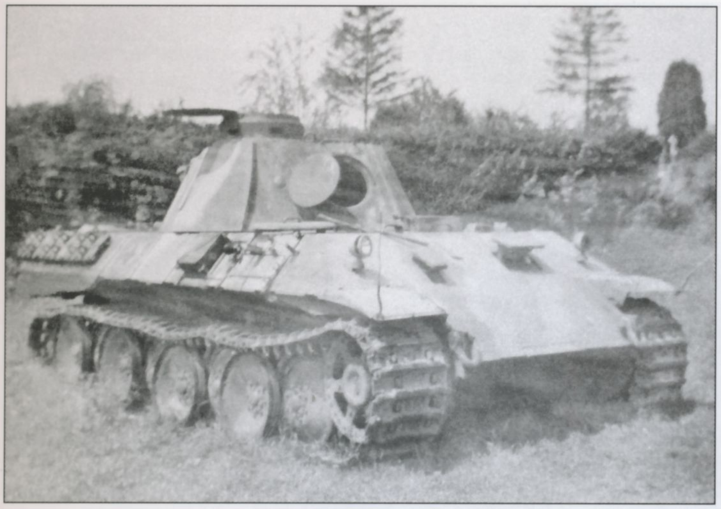
A close-up of the Isigny ordnance yard focused on the turrets of two Panthers. This photo was taken in September 1944.



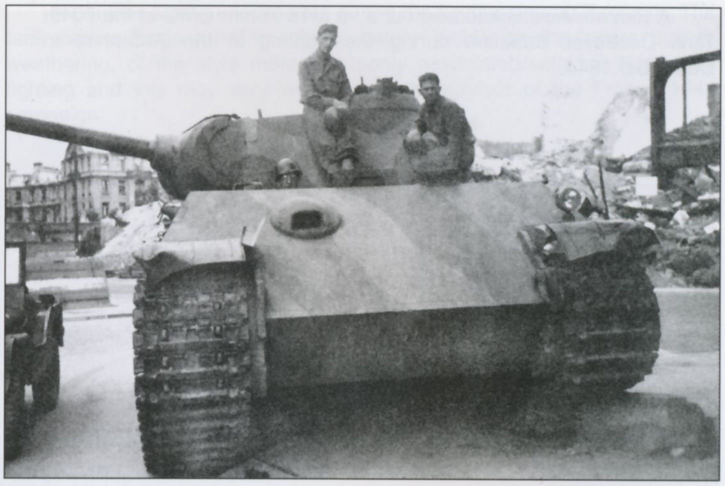
Another ordnance yard was created near Isigny at Trevieres in Normandy and this is a view of some of its holdings on 4 September 1944. Aside from the three Panther tanks, there is a Renault R-35 which had been converted to carry a 4.7cm anti-tank gun but with the superstructure subsequently removed. To its left is a Chenillette Lorraine converted into a tank destroyer with the addition of a 7.5cm PaK 40 anti-tank gun, and named Lowe (lion).



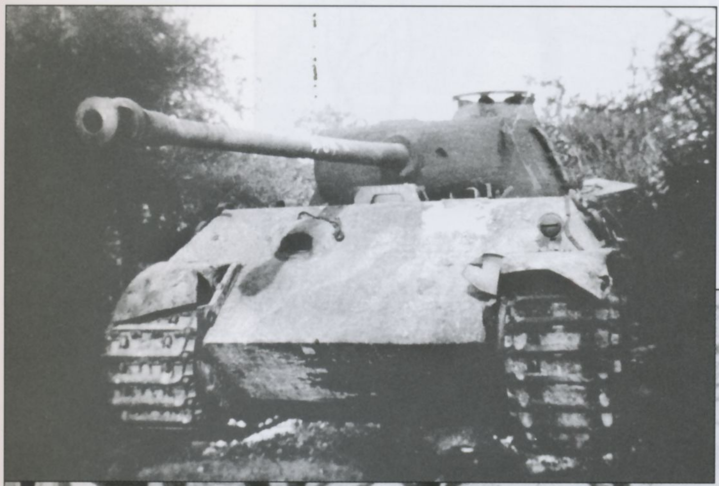
A relatively rare example of a Panther Ausf.D captured by the US 5th Armored Division in France in the summer of 1944. Few of this version were encountered by the US Army in France, the Ausf.A being more common.



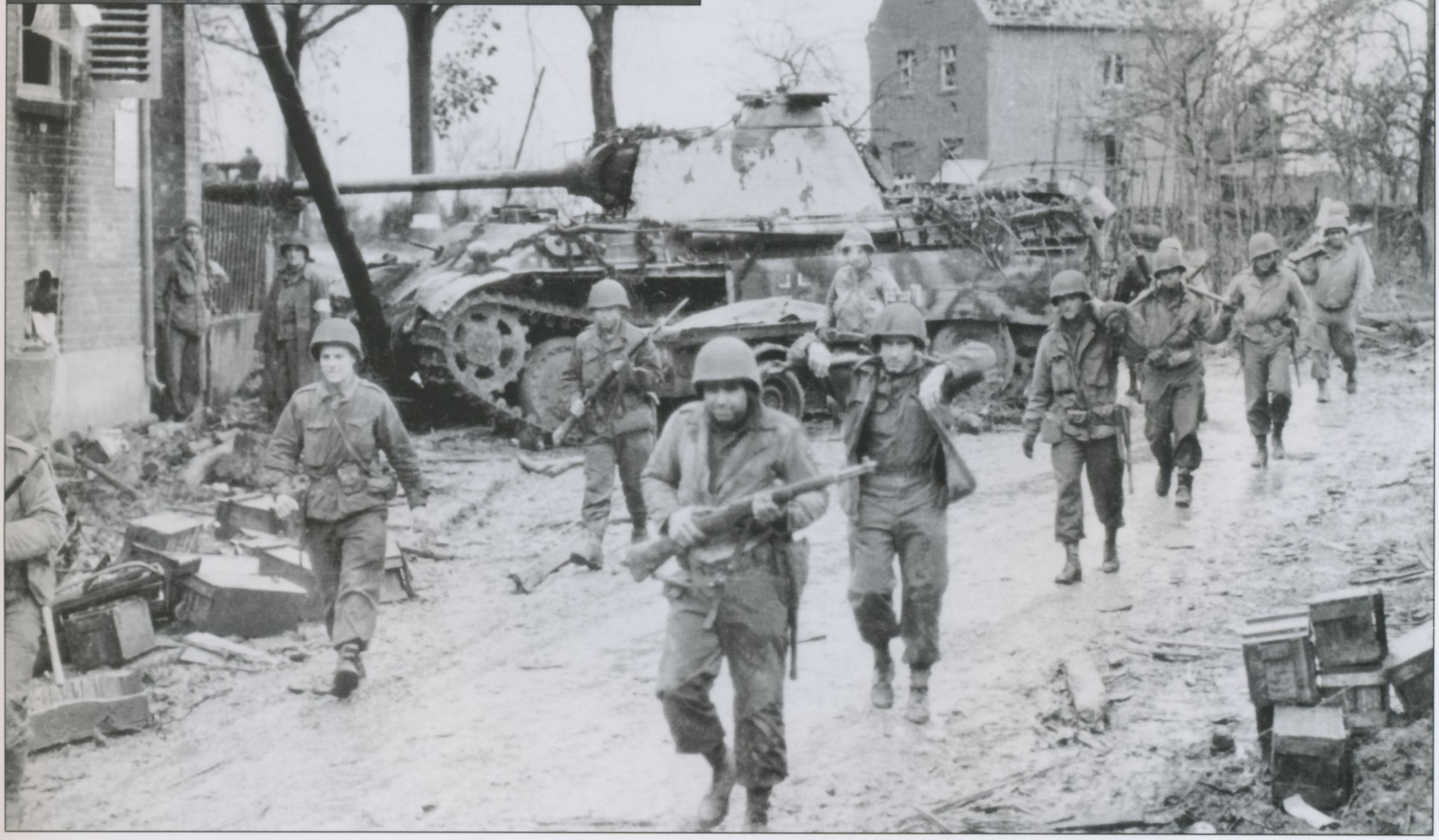
Another view of the Panther Ausf.D captured by the 5th Armored Division in France in the summer of 1944, probably from 9.Panzer-Division.



Some tankers of the 10th Armored Division sit on a Panther Ausf.G abandoned in Germany in 1945.

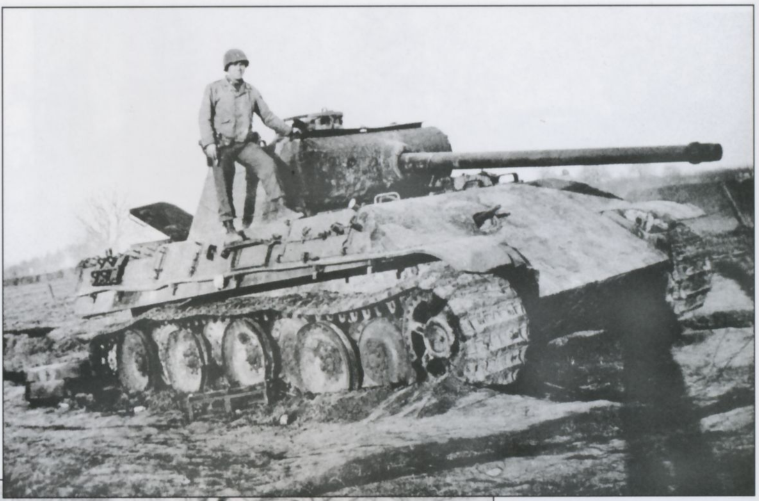


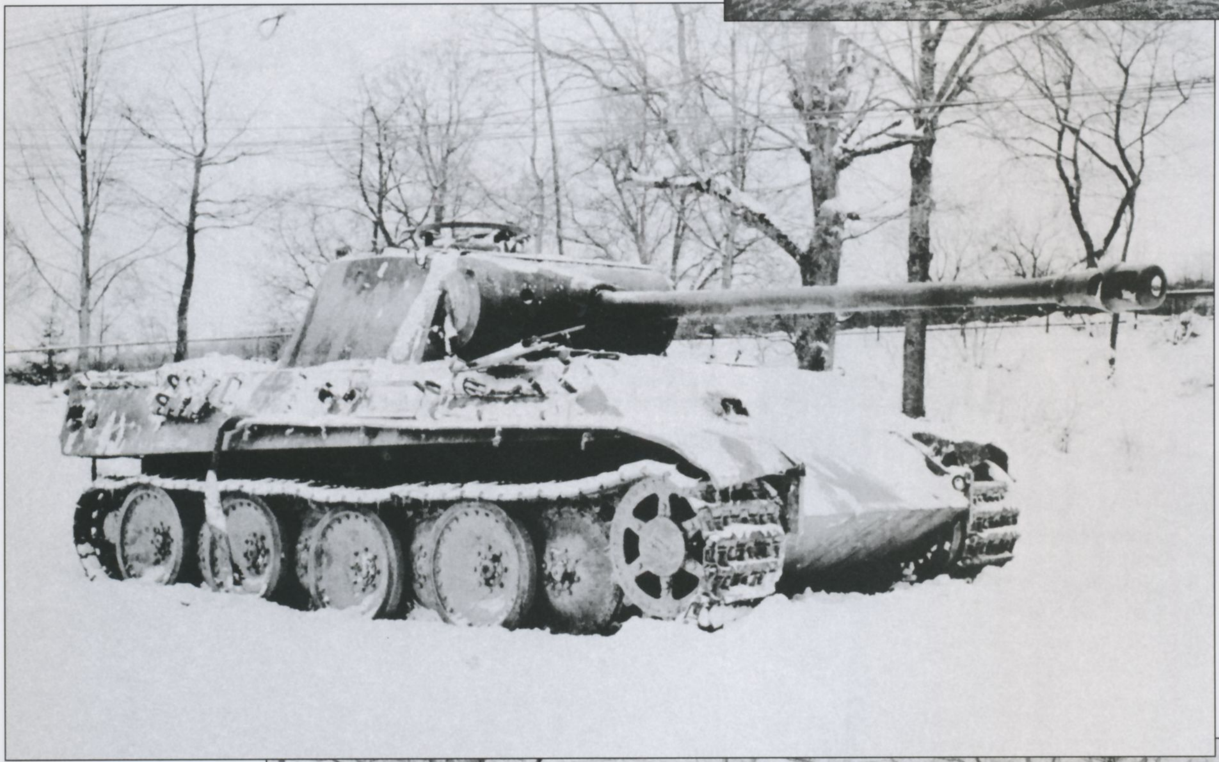
A burnt-out Panther Ausf.G captured by the 109th Infantry, 28th Division during the autumn 1944 fighting.



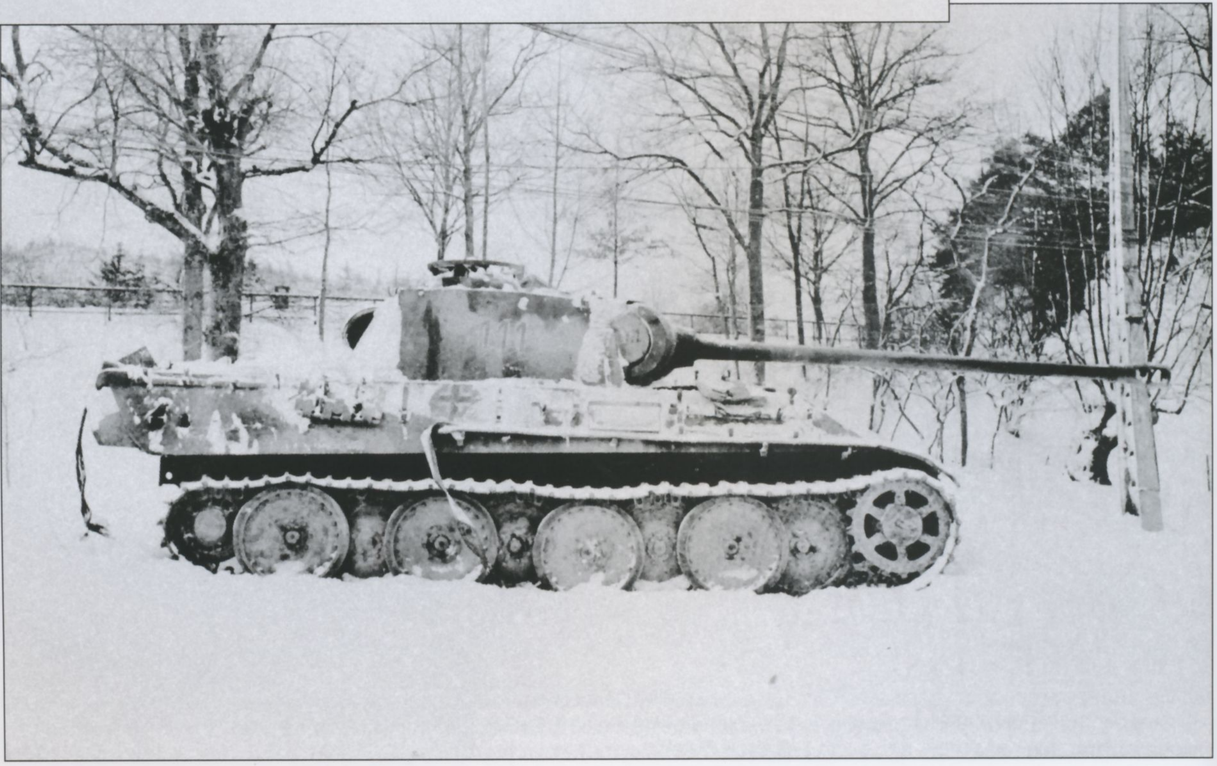
A burnt-out Panther Ausf.G probably from the 9.Panzer-Division is passed by US infantry of the 29th Division in Immendorf on 16 November 1944 during the start of the Roer offensive.

A Panther Ausf.G knocked out by a M18 76mm GMC of the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion during the fighting in the Ardennes in December 1944.

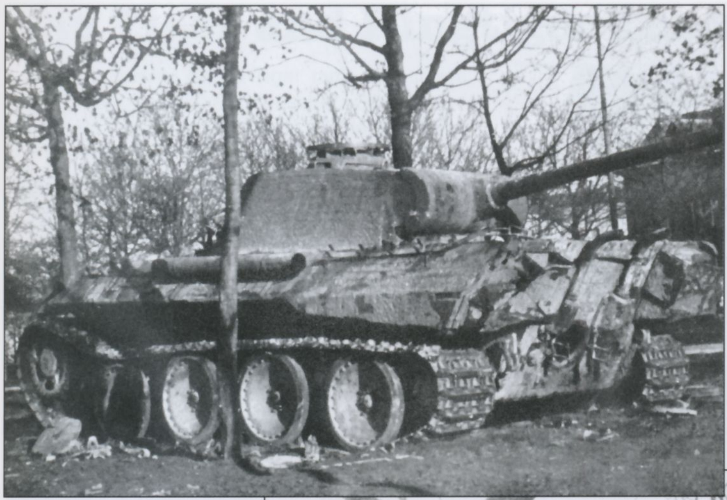




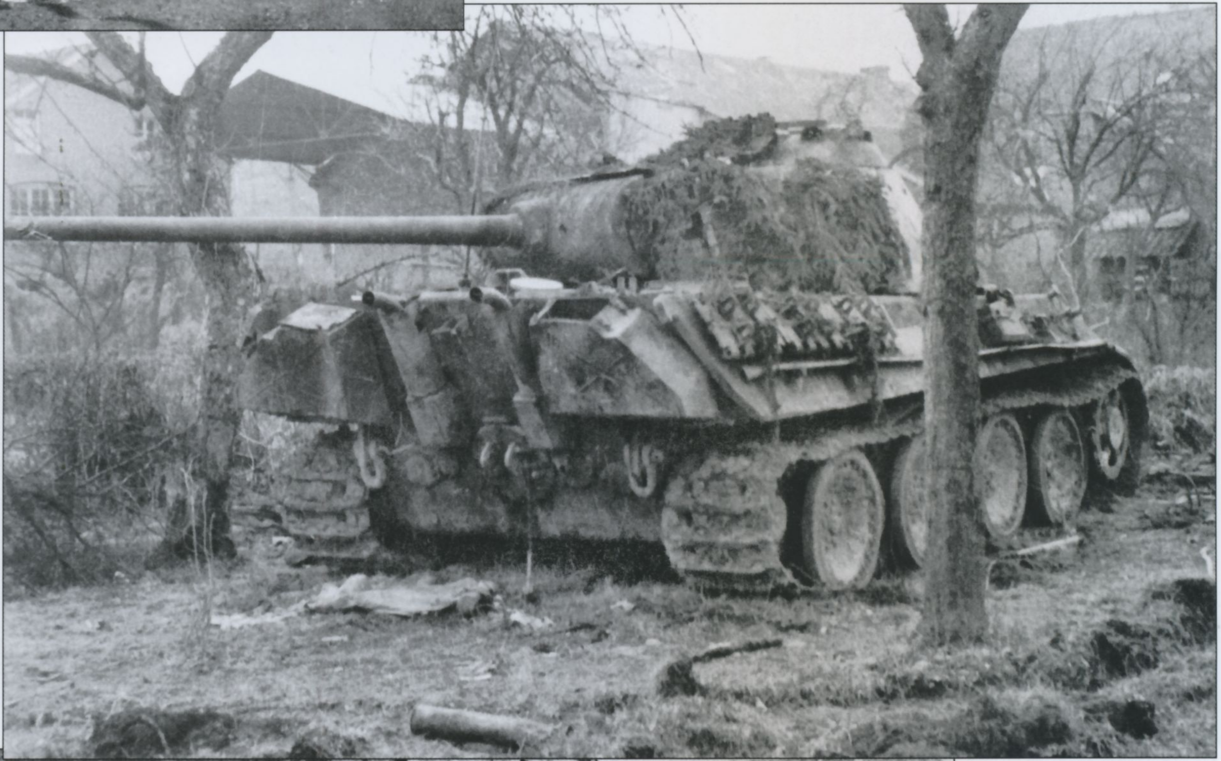
This Panther Ausf.G belonging to Kampfgruppe Peiper of the 1.SS-Panzer-Division was recovered from the area near La Gleize and moved to the First US Army HQ near Spa, Belgium for a display to the headquarters units.



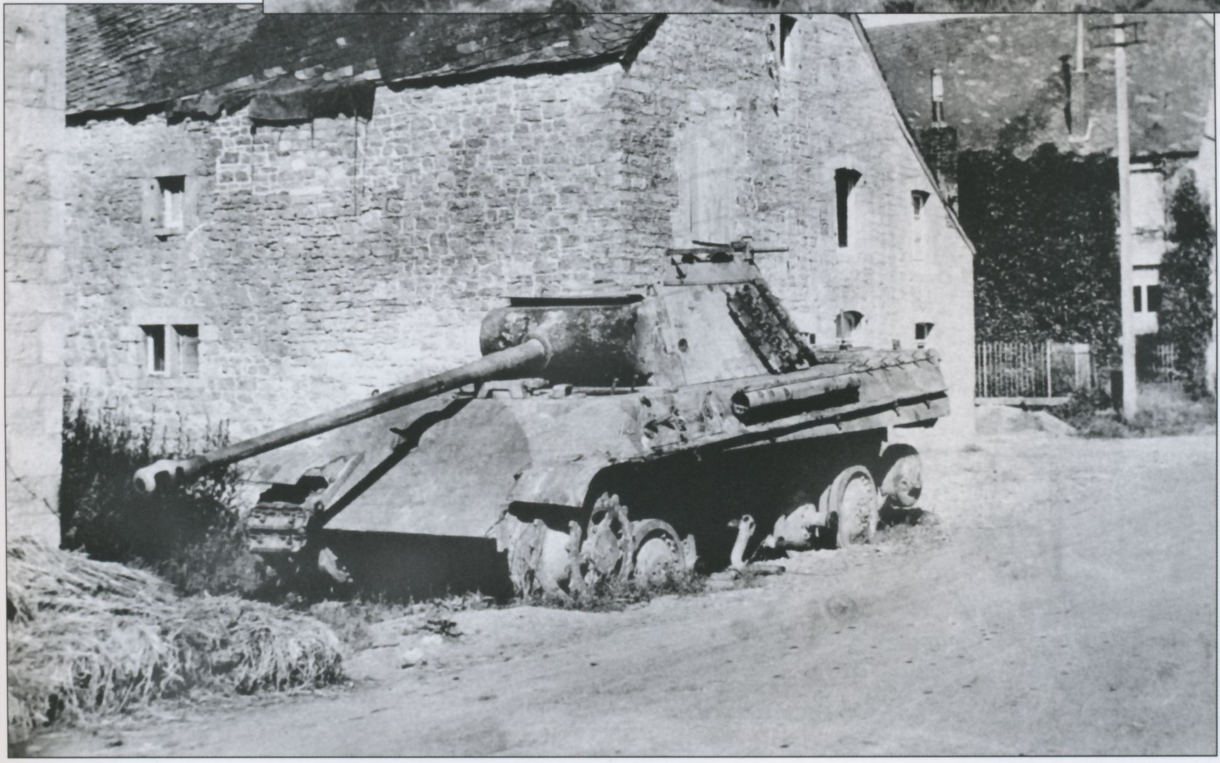
Another view of the Panther Ausf.G shows its tactical number painted on the turret side, "111".



A Panther Ausf.A knocked out during the fighting around Bastogne. The tank carries large turret numbers, barely visible on this photo due to weathering, of the style more commonly associated with the Normandy fighting and this may very well be a rare survivor of the France 1944 campaign.

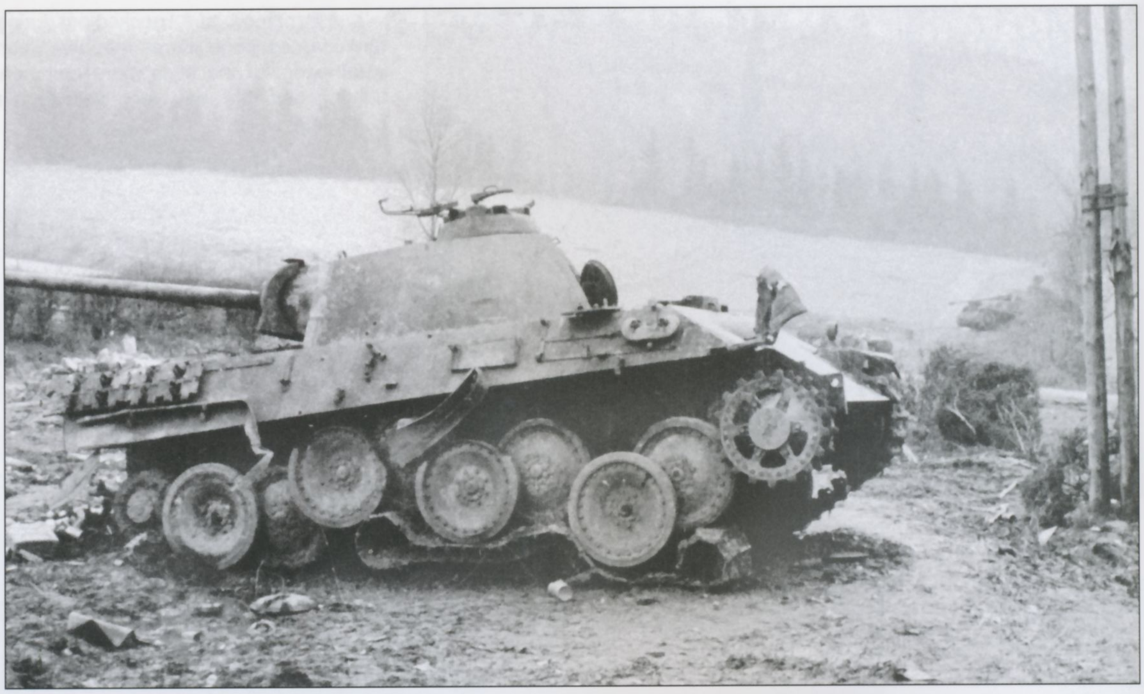


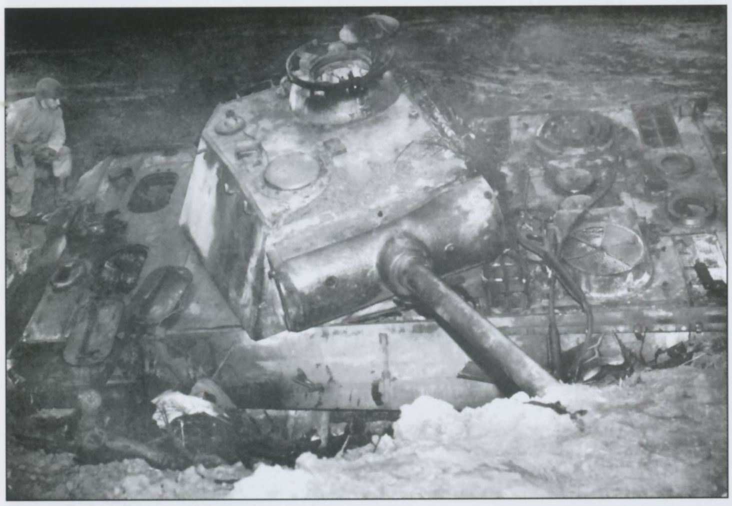
One of several Panther Ausf.G tanks of the 116.Panzer-Division knocked out by the 638th Tank Destroyer Battalion during the bitter fighting for Hotton during the Battle of the Bulge.



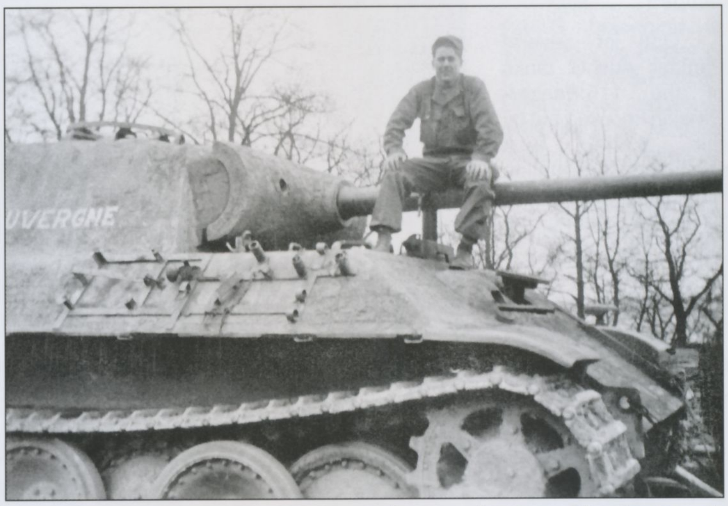
Another Panther Ausf.G of the 116.Panzer-Division knocked out in Hotton during the fighting with the 3rd Armored Division during the Battle of the Bulge.

A Panther Ausf.G knocked out by a M18 76mm GMC of the 638th Tank Destroyer Battalion during the fighting for Hotton in December 1944.

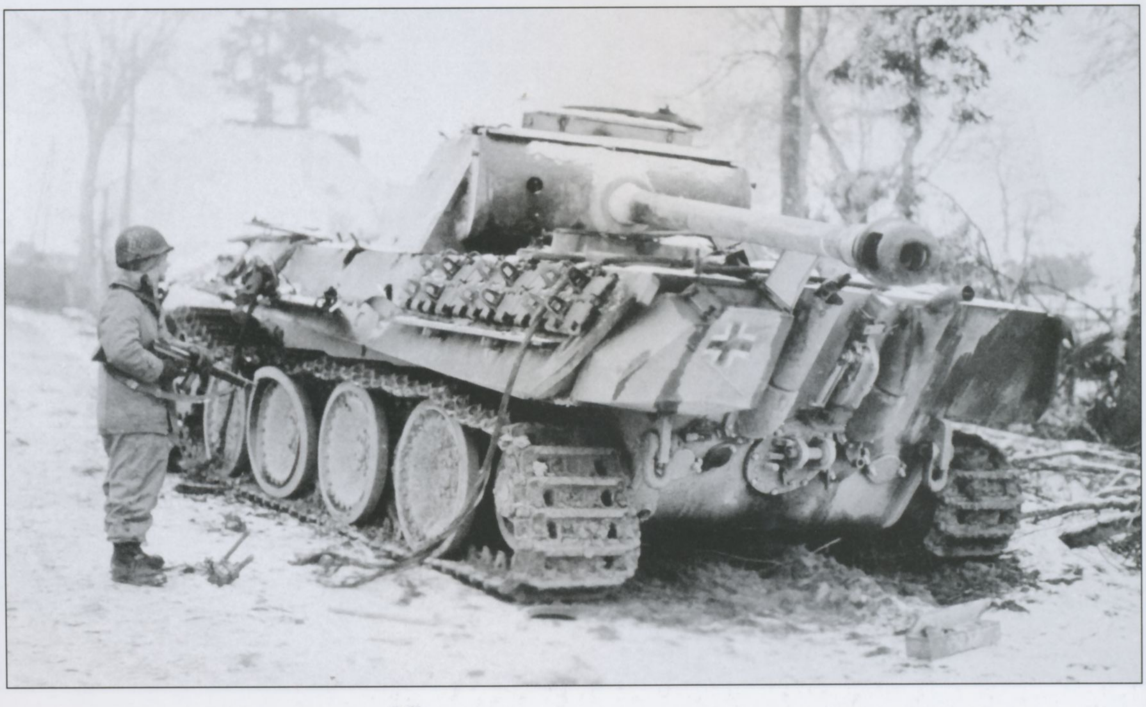




A Panther Ausf.G knocked out probably during the Battle of the Bulge and photographed at night.



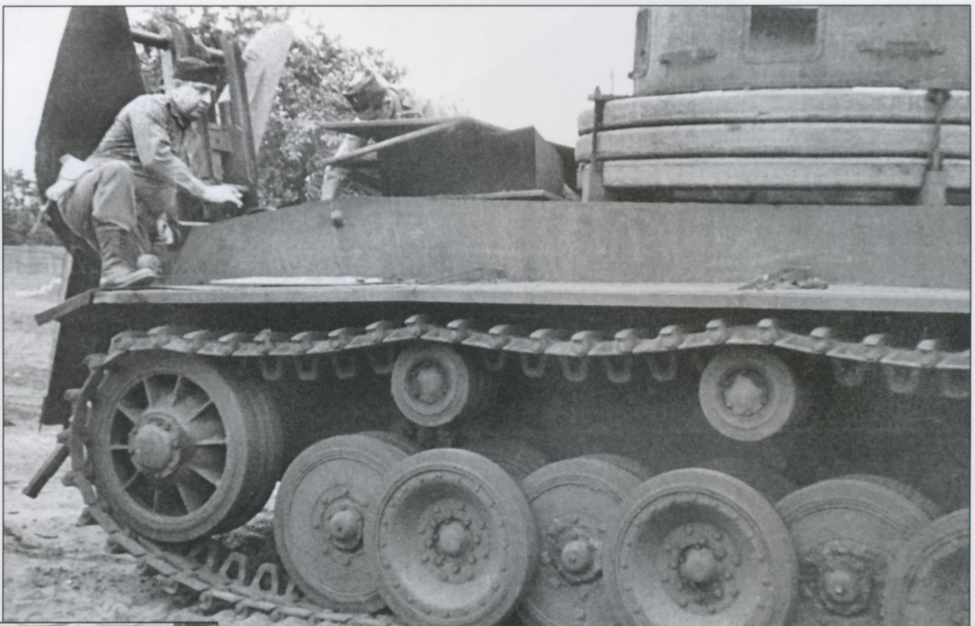
A number of captured Panther tanks were later used by the French Army, and this Panther Ausf.A named "Auvergne" is seen after the war.

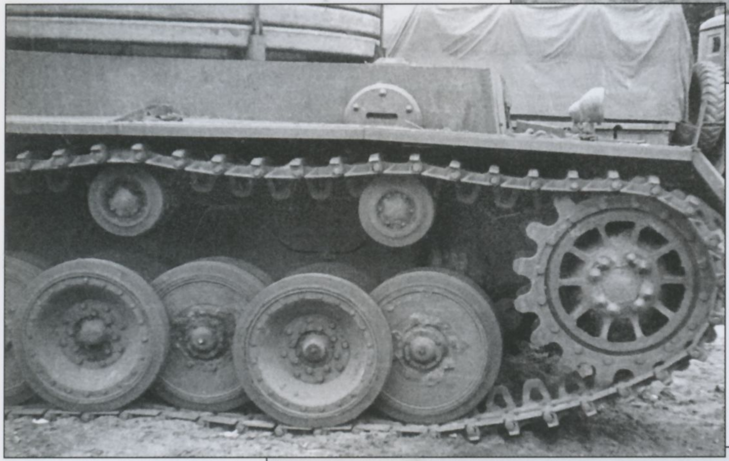


A GI inspects a knocked out Panther Ausf.G in Neffe, Belgium on 3 January 1945 during the Battle of the Bulge, probably from Panzer Lehr Division which fought for this town during the attempts to break into Bastogne.

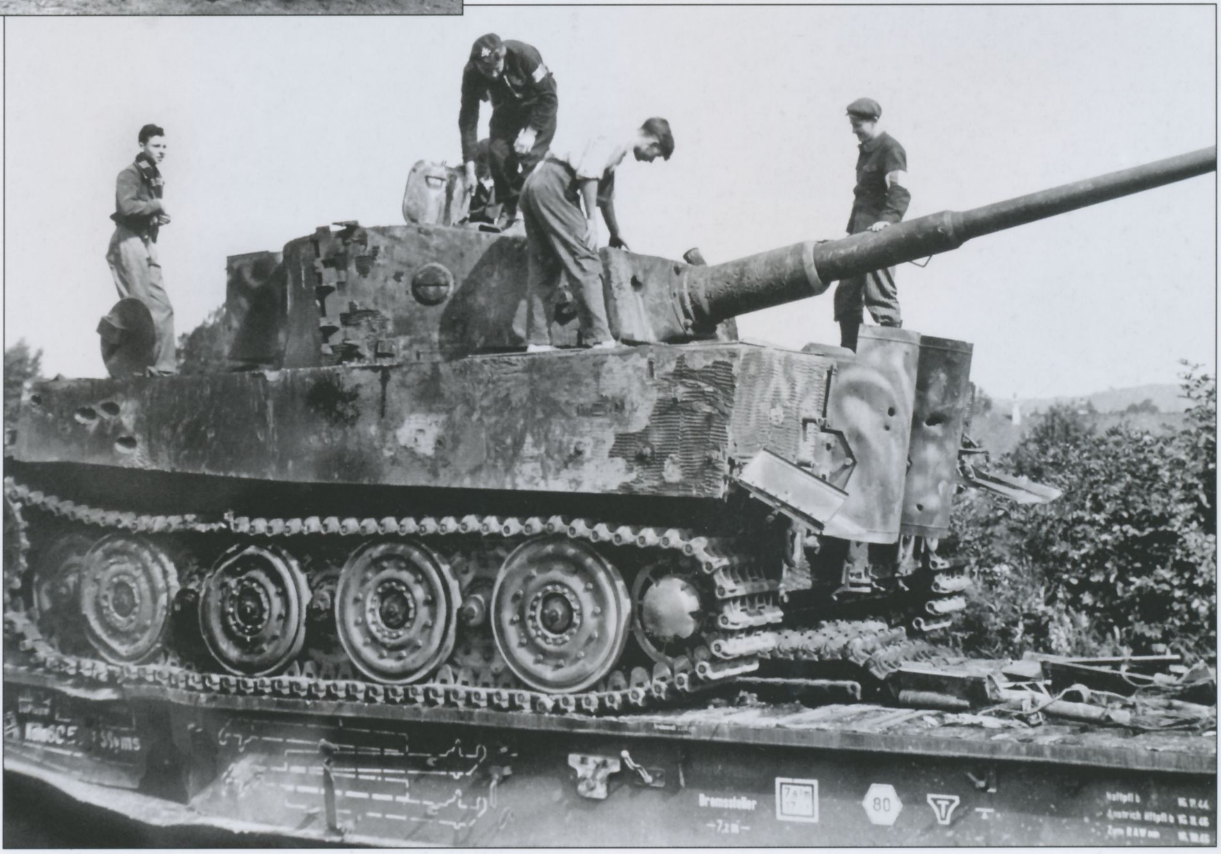
The Tiger and Kingtiger Tanks

The ancestor of the Tiger tank series was the VK3001(H) built by Henschel. One of the pilots was found by US troops at the Henschel proving ground at Haustenbeck in 1945 as seen here.

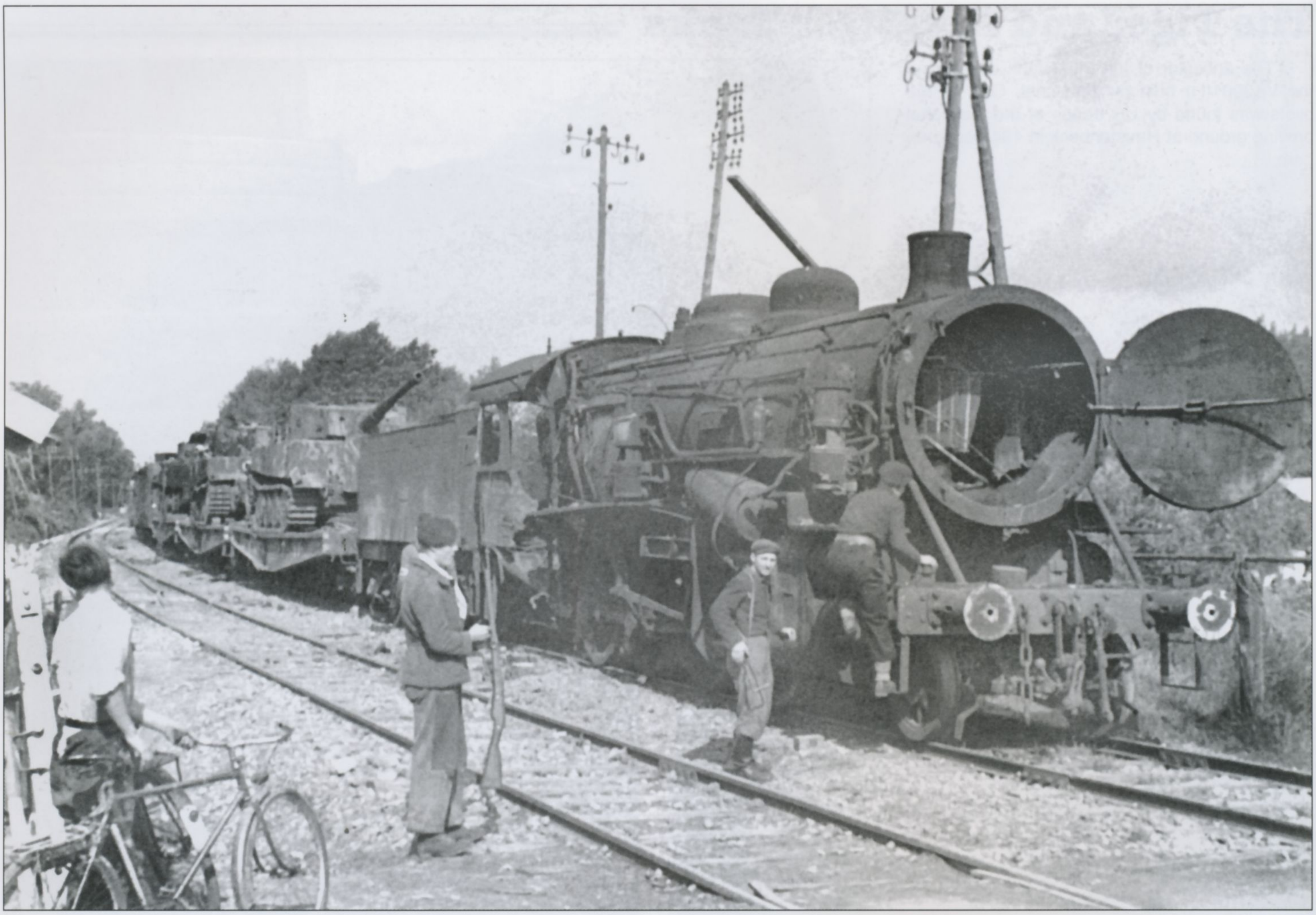




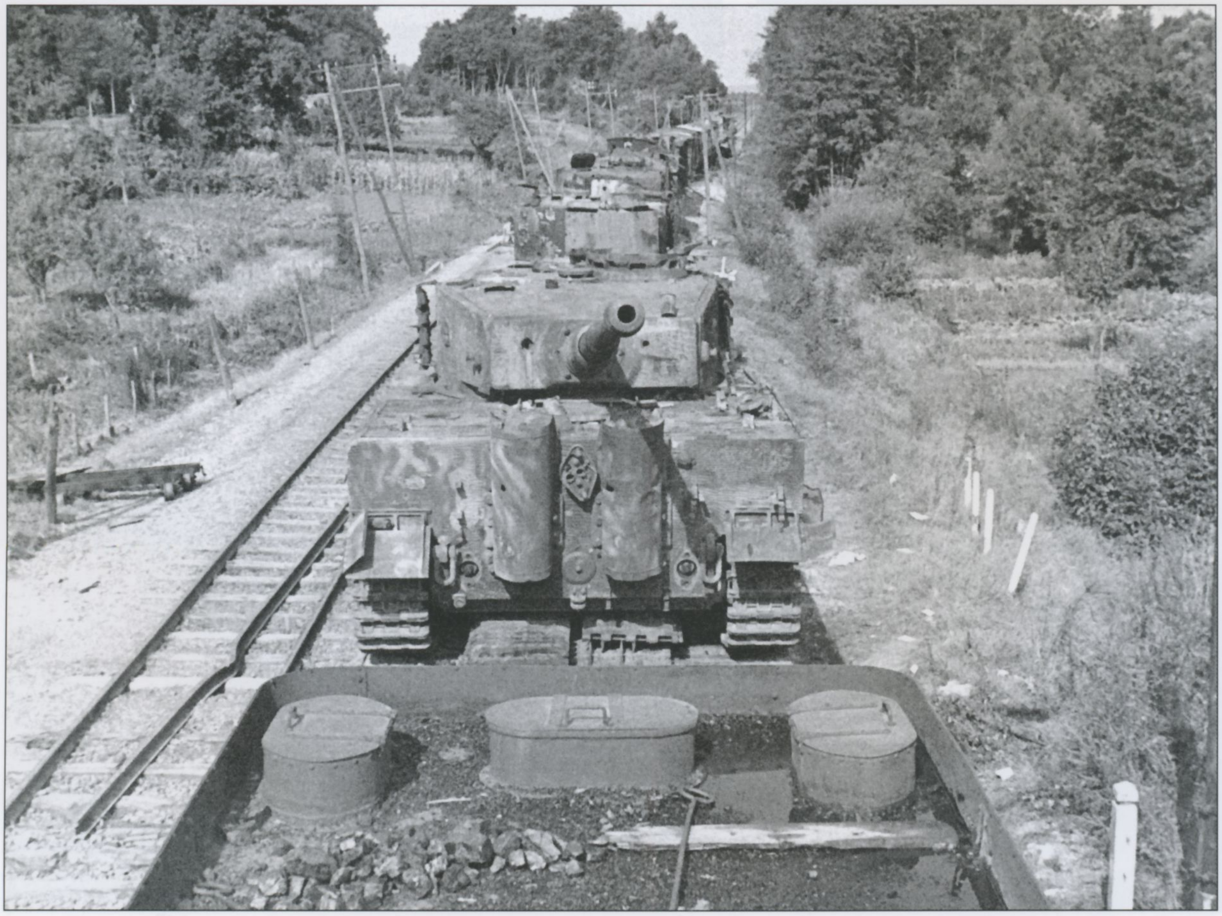
Another view of the VK3001(H) pilot tank at the Haustenbeck proving ground. The strange ring device on the top of the hull are weights designed to simulate the weight of a fully armored turret.



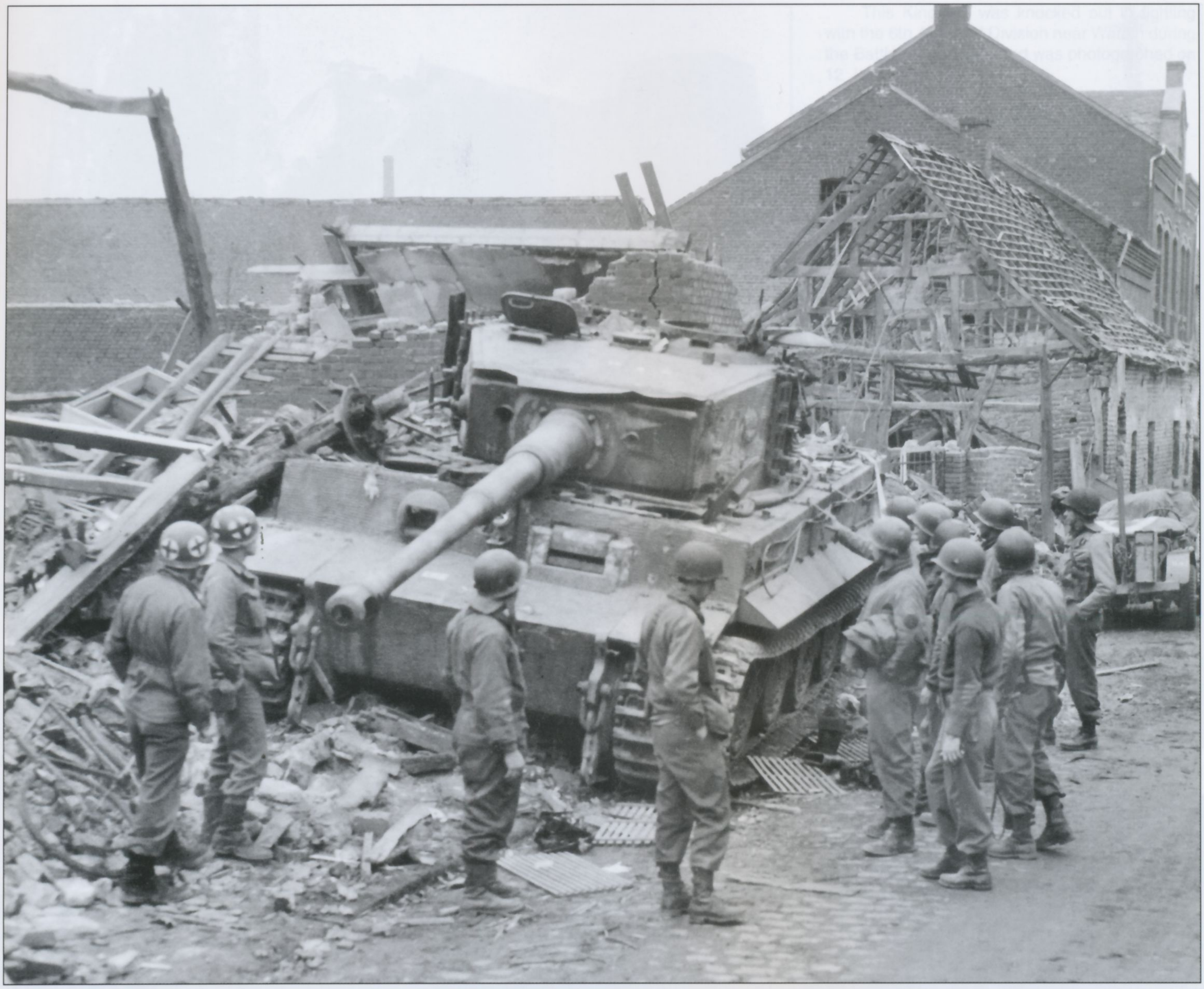
The Tiger I was seldom encountered by the US Army in France. A number were captured aboard a transport train near Braines, France on 8 September 1944 by the 468th AAA Battalion and here one is seen being inspected by members of the French resistance.



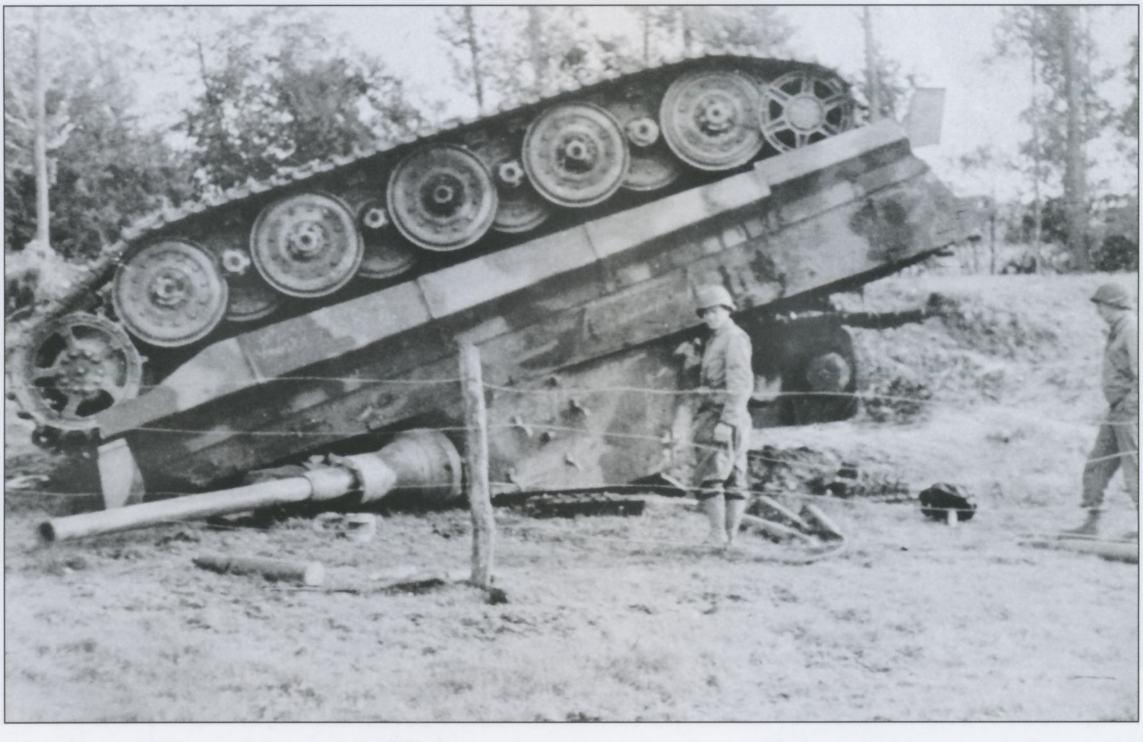
A view of the train at Braines carrying a number of Tigers.



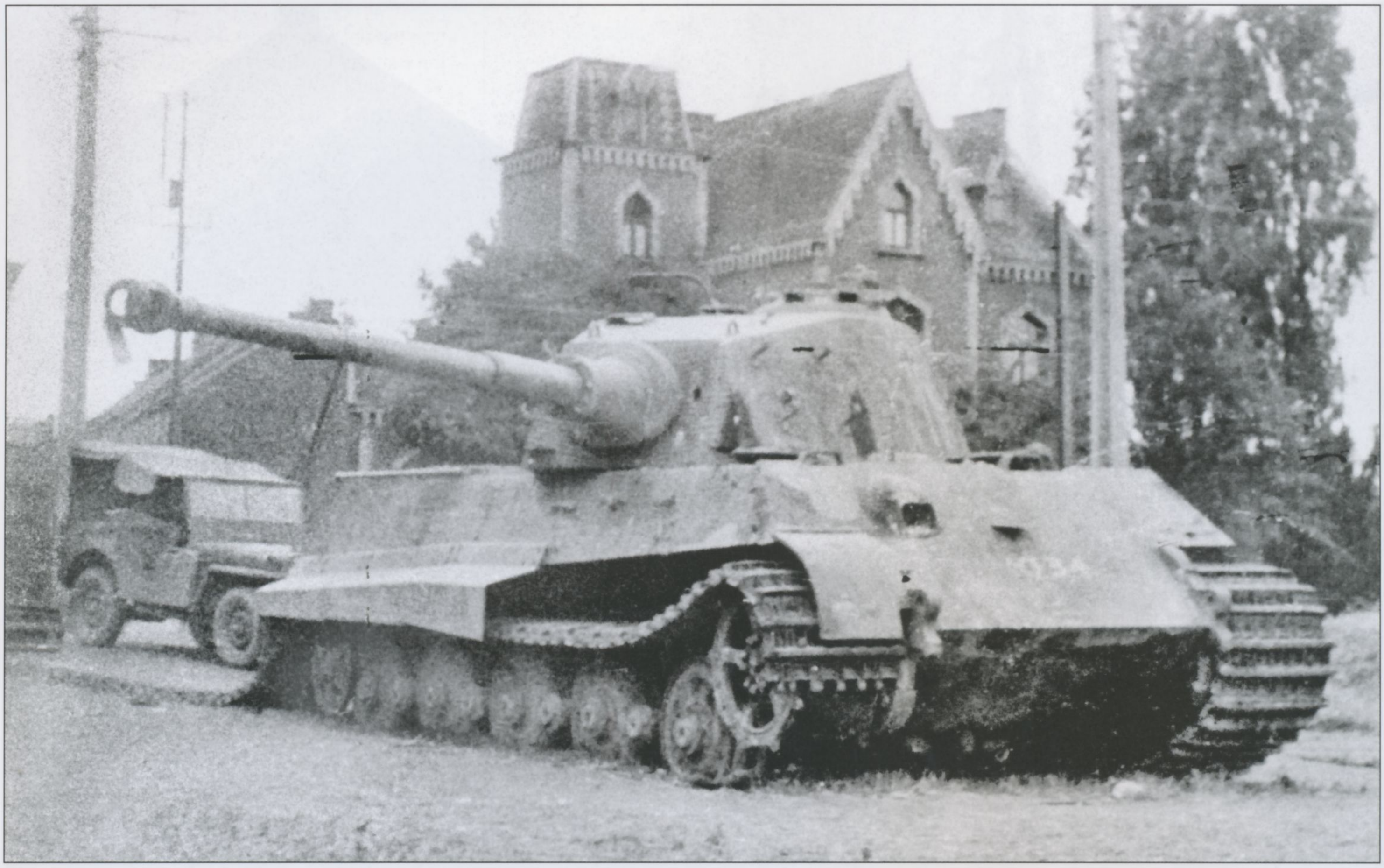
Another view of the transport train with Tiger tanks captured near Braines on 8 September 1944.



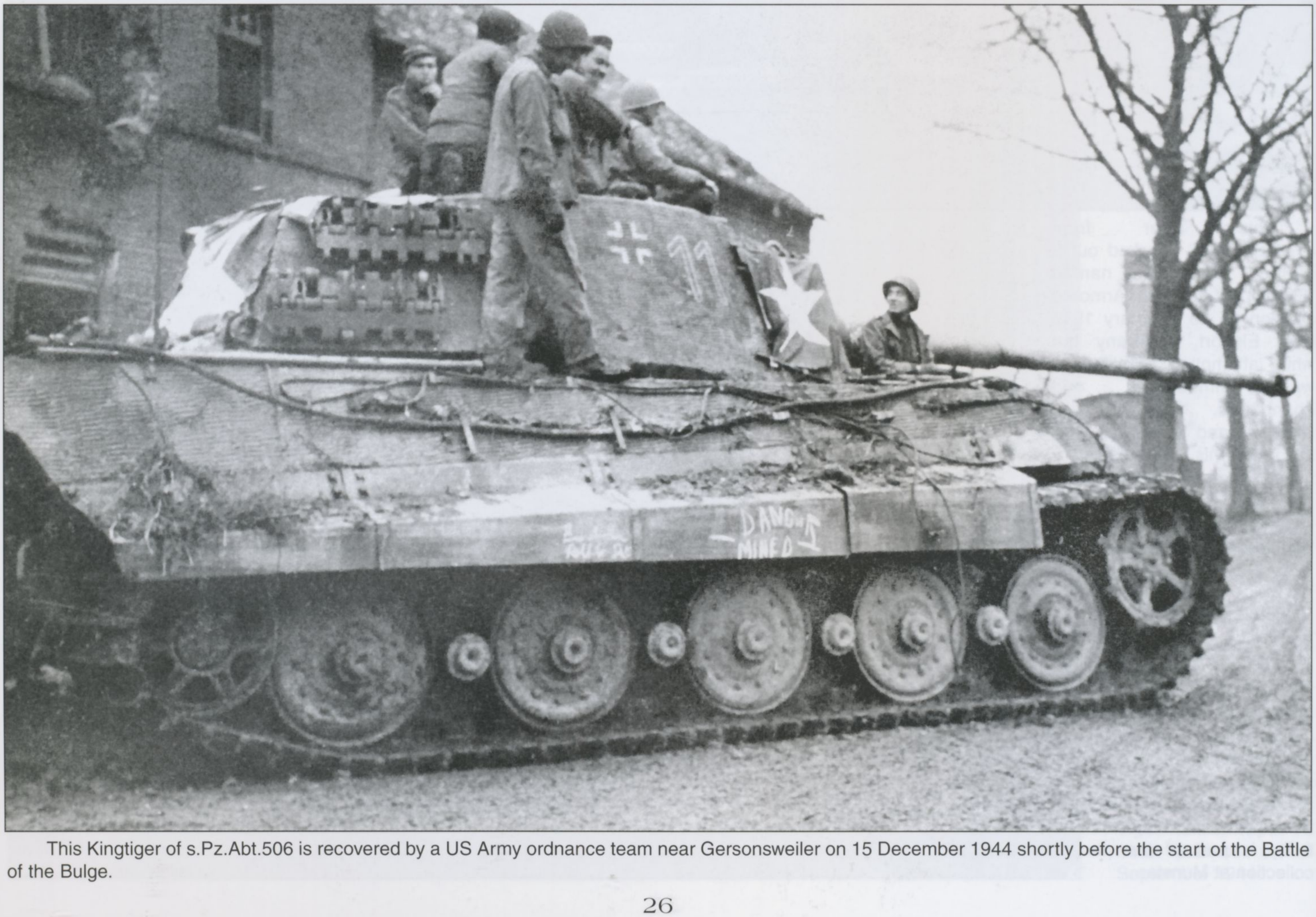
This Tiger from 4./s.Pz.Abt.506 knocked out a T26E3 Pershing named "Fireball" of the 3rd Armored Division on 26 February 1945 near Elsdorf, Germany but while attempting to withdraw was immobilized and abandoned. "Fireball" was repaired and put back into action, but this Tiger fell into US hands. Another Tiger from the unit was knocked out the following day in an encounter with another Pershing.



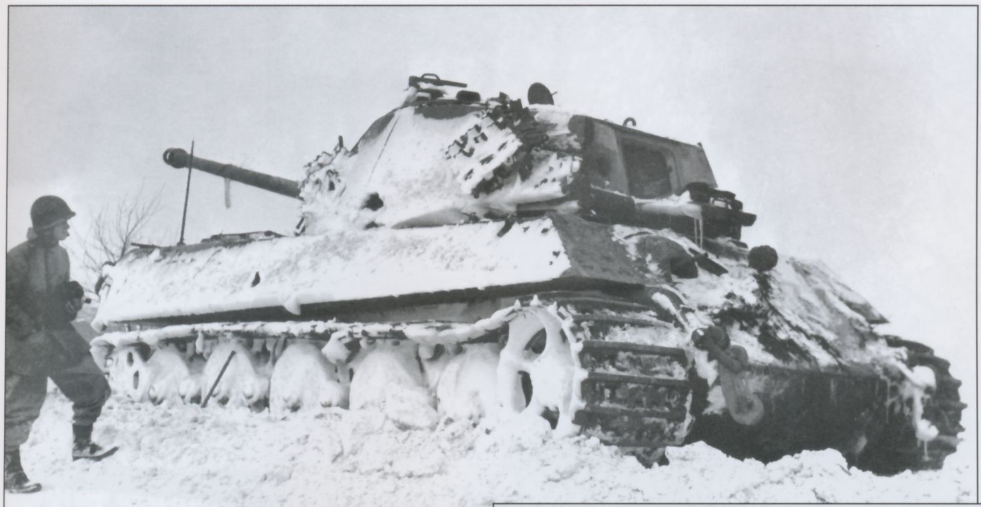
This Kingtiger number "121" of SS s.Pz.Abt.101 was abandoned near La Cappele France when it ran out of fuel and spiked by its crew. US units subsequently pushed it off the road and it flipped over as seen here. It was later recovered and today is part of the panzer collection at Munster.



A Kingtiger found by the US Army abandoned by its crew.

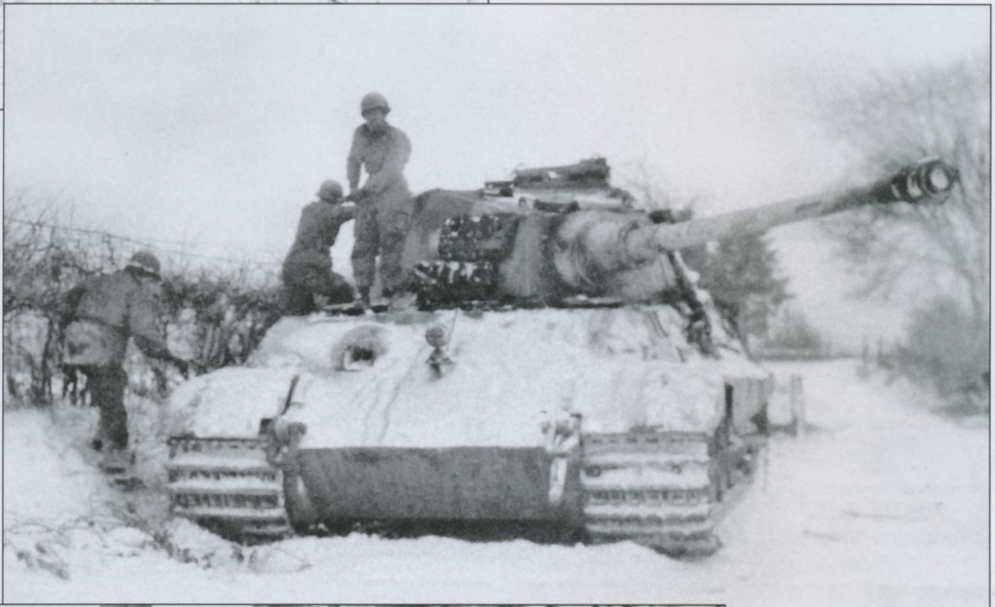


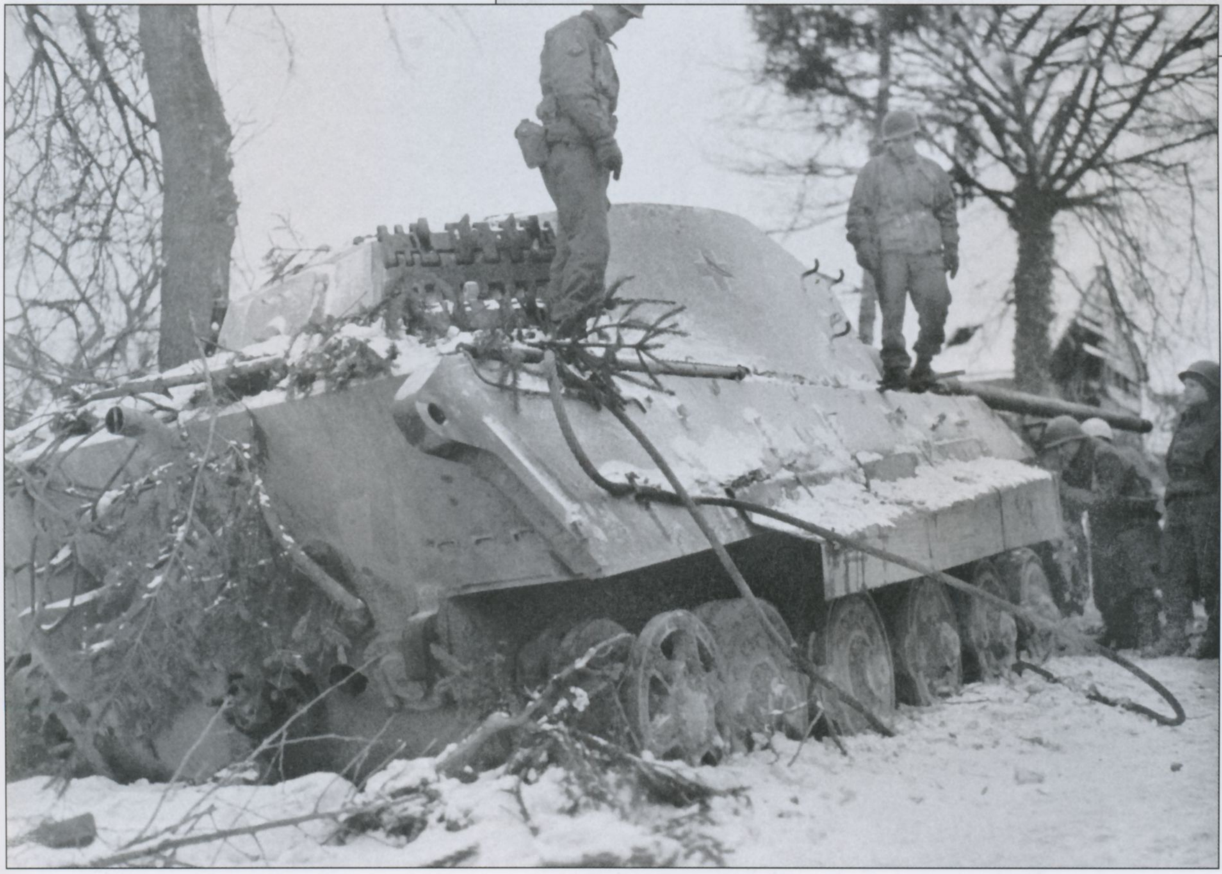
This Kingtiger of s.Pz.Abt.506 is recovered by a US Army ordnance team near Gersonsweiler on 15 December 1944 shortly before the start of the Battle of the Bulge.



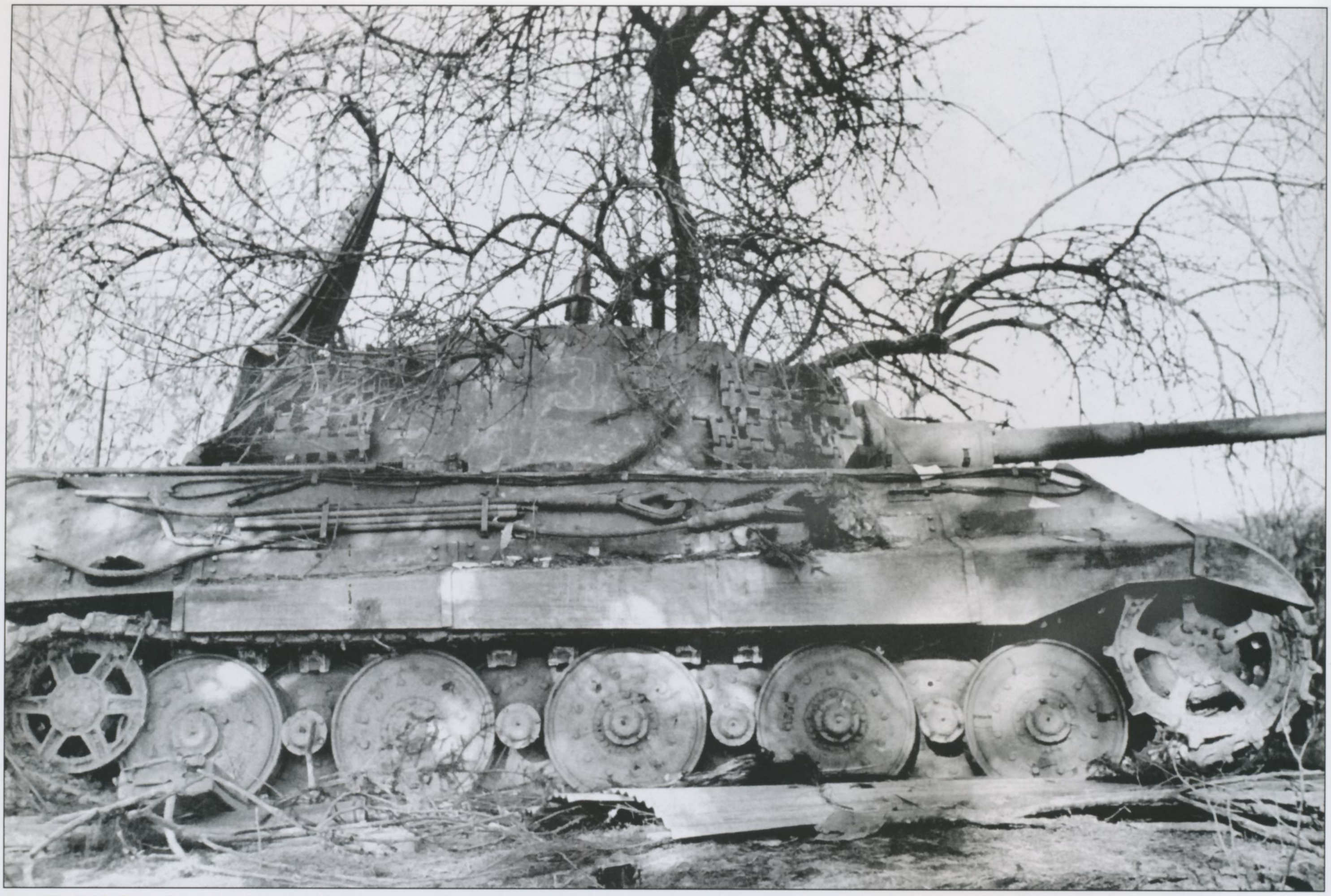
This Kingtiger was knocked out in fighting with the 6th Armored Division near Wardin during the Battle of the Bulge and was photographed on 12 January 1945.

An abandoned Kingtiger of SS s.Pz.Abt.501 is inspected by troops of the 82nd Airborne Division in the Ambleve valley in January 1945.

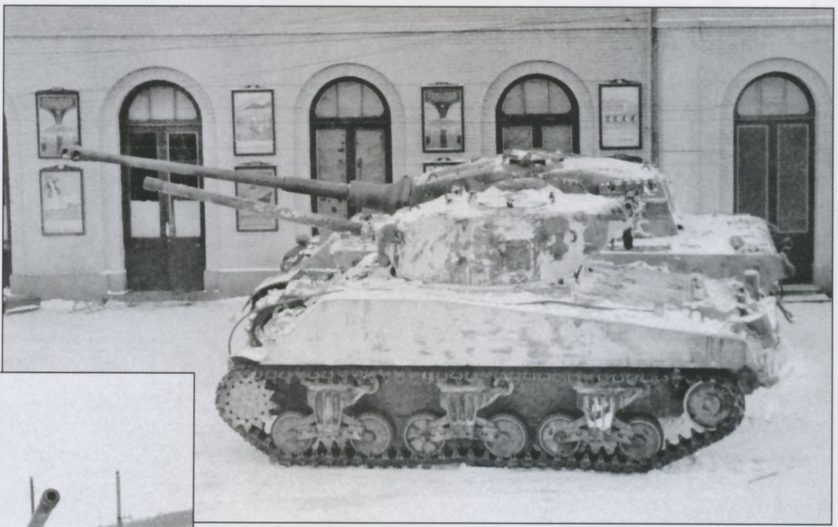




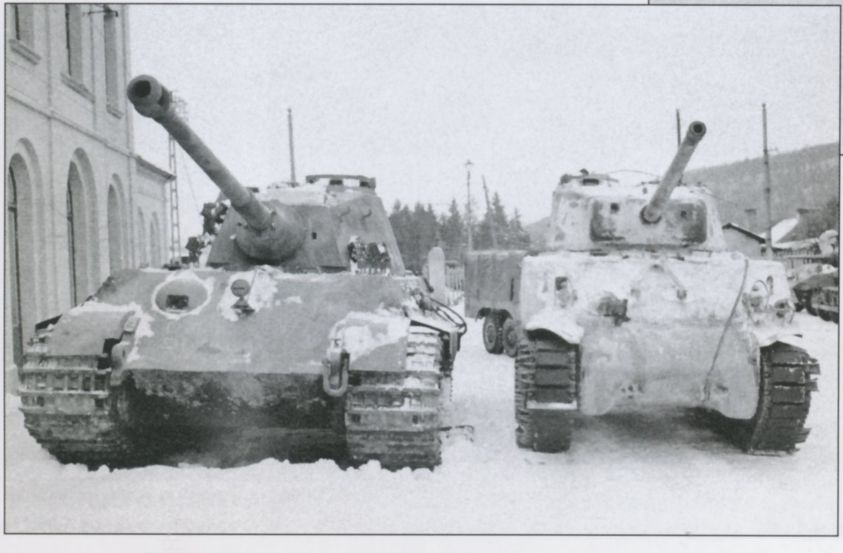
Another abandoned Kingtiger of SS s.Pz.Abt.501 is inspected by troops of the 82nd Airborne Division in the Ambleve valley in January 1945.



The US First Army retrieved a Kingtiger, number "332" of SS s.Pz.Abt.501, part of Kampfgruppe Peiper, which was abandoned near Bourgoument following the fighting in the Ambleve valley.

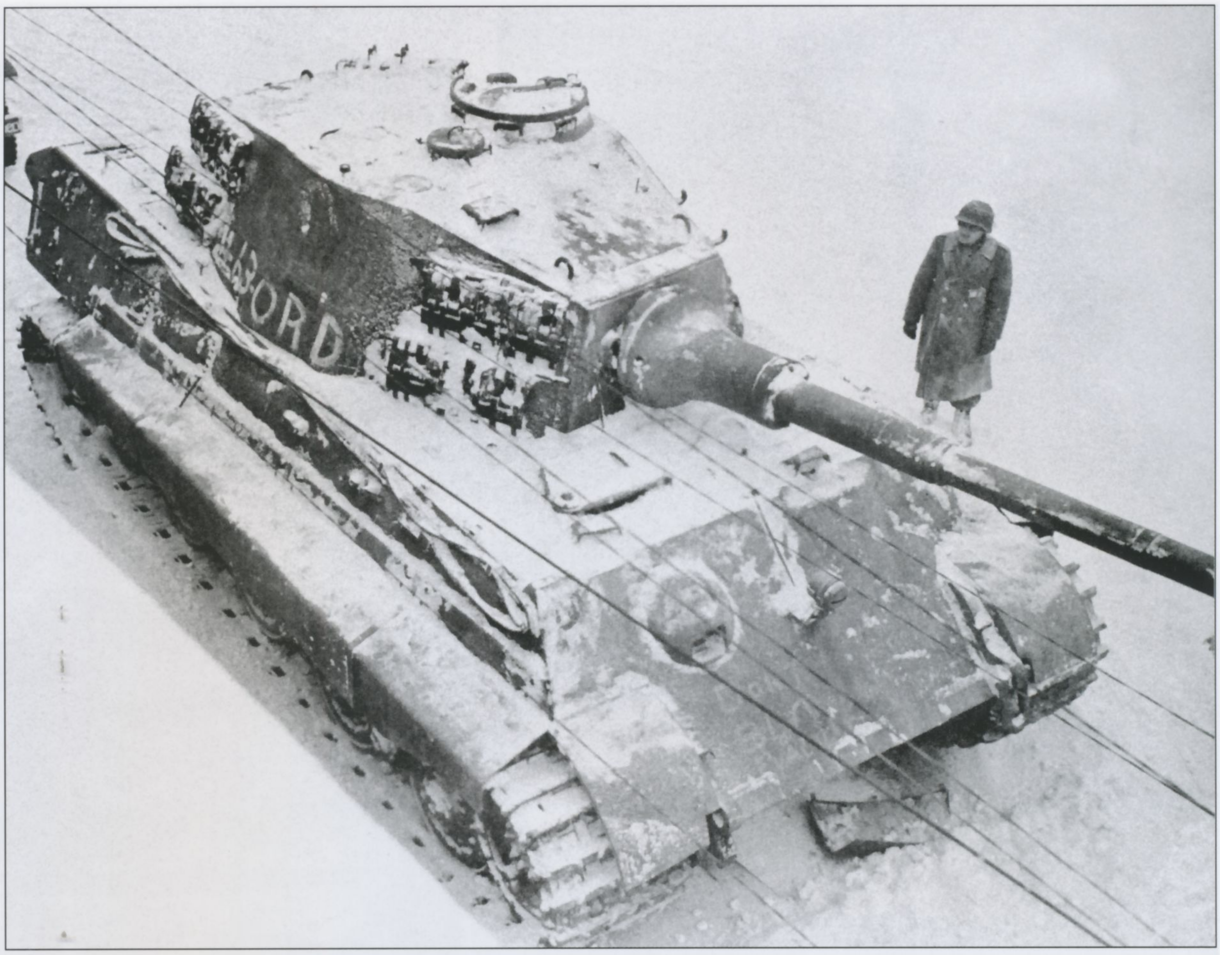


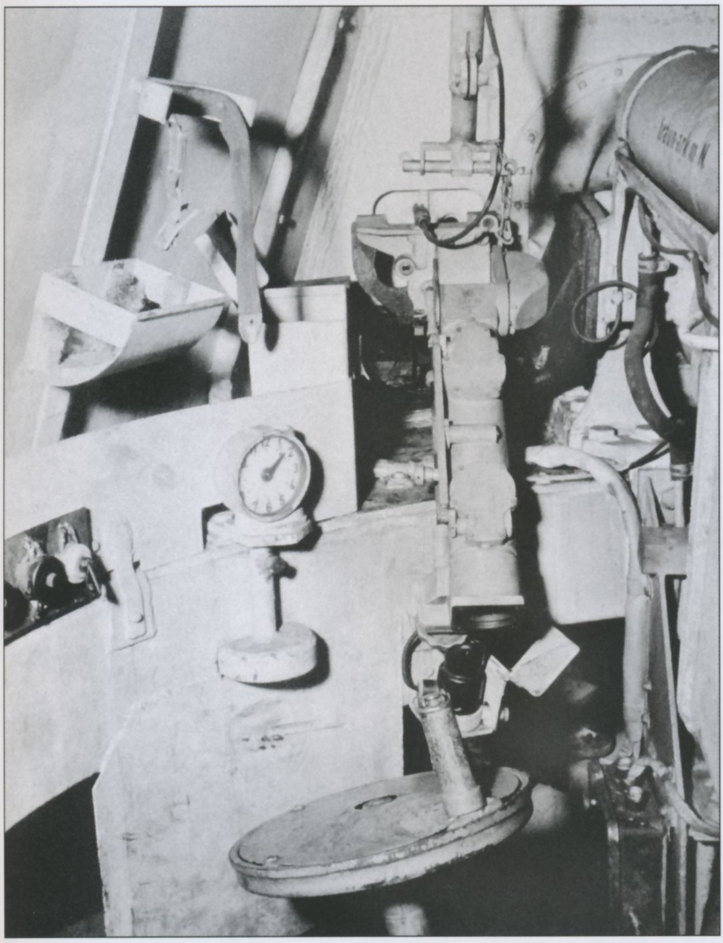
Kingtiger "332" was moved from Bourgoument to Spa, Belgium near the US First Army headquarters for display to senior staff. It was placed next to a M4A3 (76mm) to show the relative size difference. This tank was subsequently moved to Aberdeen Proving Ground and is now on display at the Patton Museum at Fort Knox.



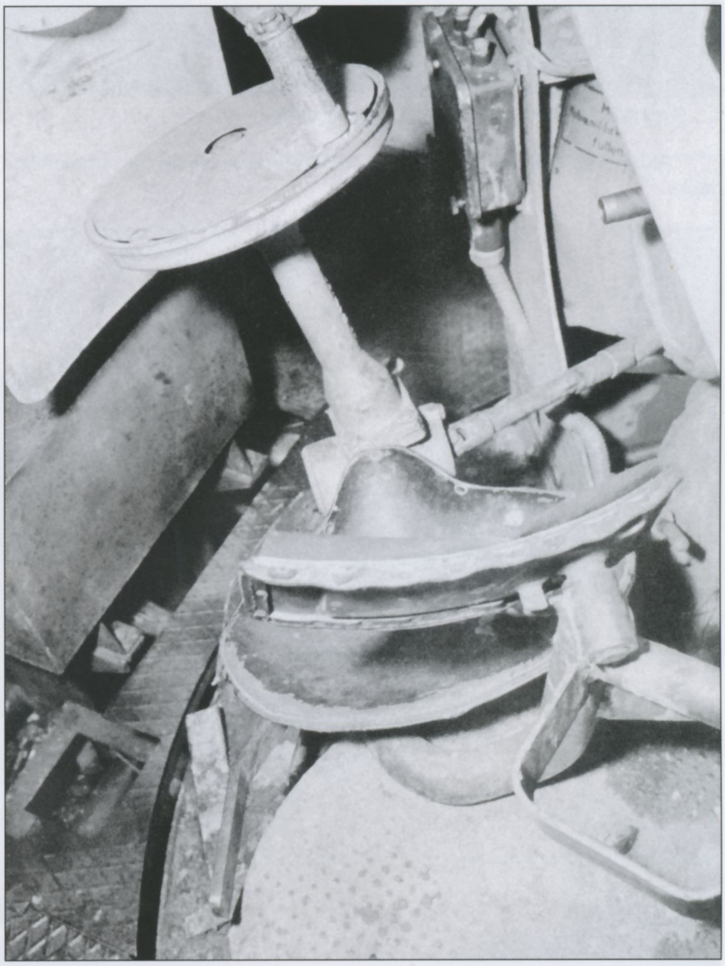
Kingtiger "332" at Spa in January 1945 next to a M4A3 (76mm).

Kingtiger "332" at Spa as taken from a window overhead.

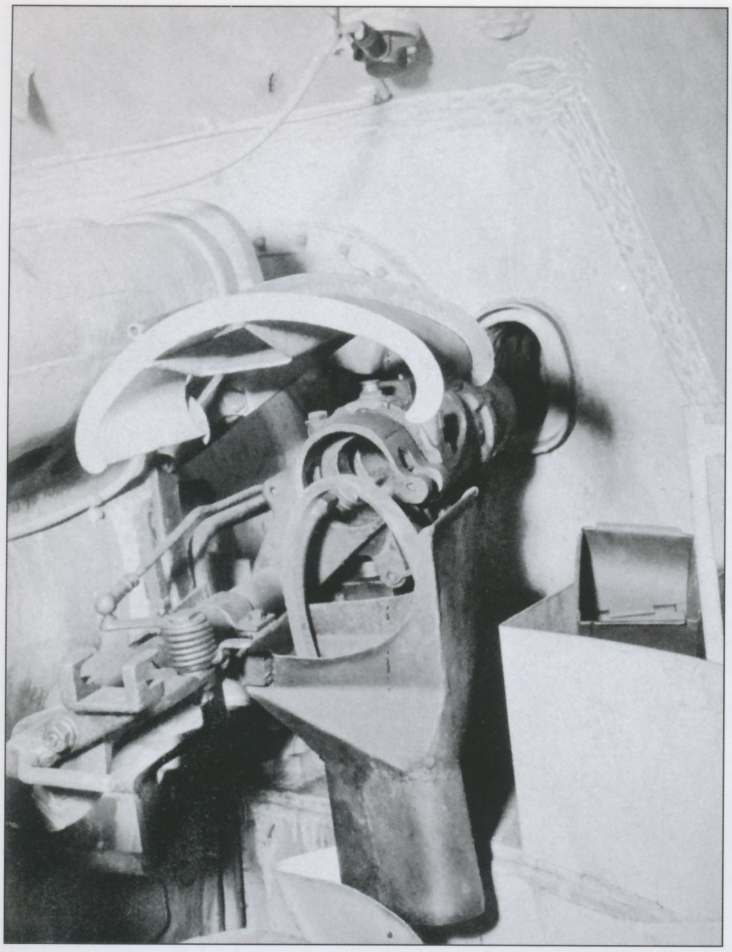




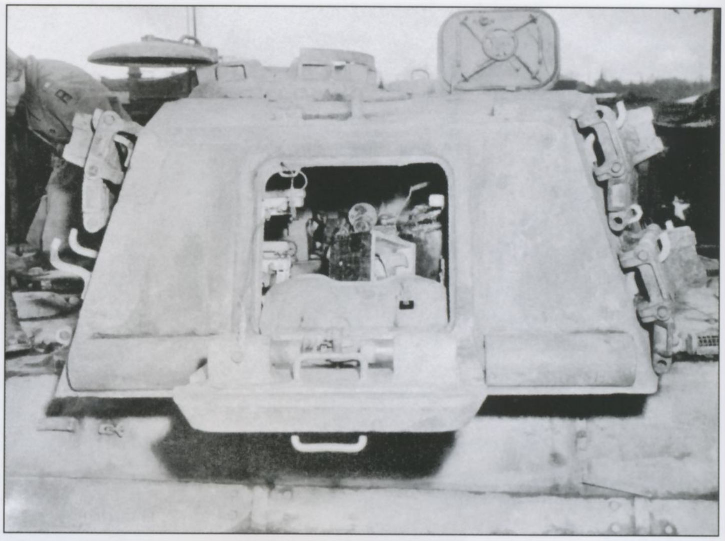
A view inside the turret of Kingtiger "332" showing the gunner's station in the left front corner of the turret.



A view slightly below showing the gunner's seat in Kingtiger "332".

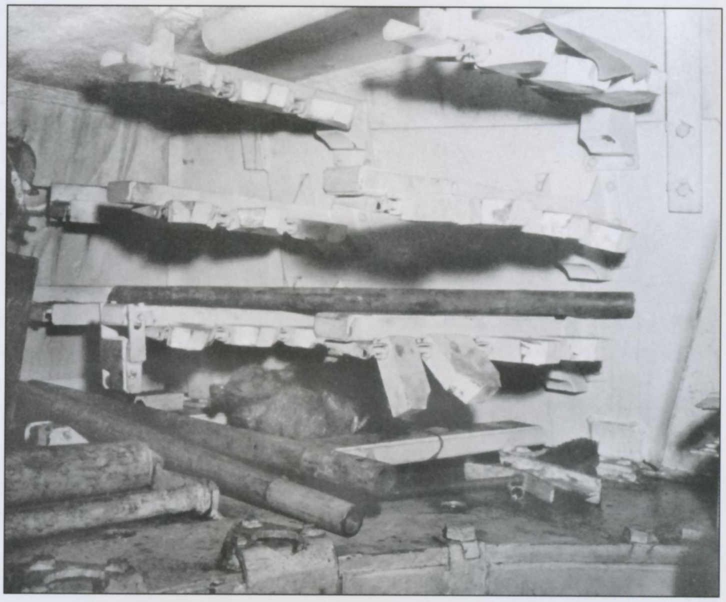


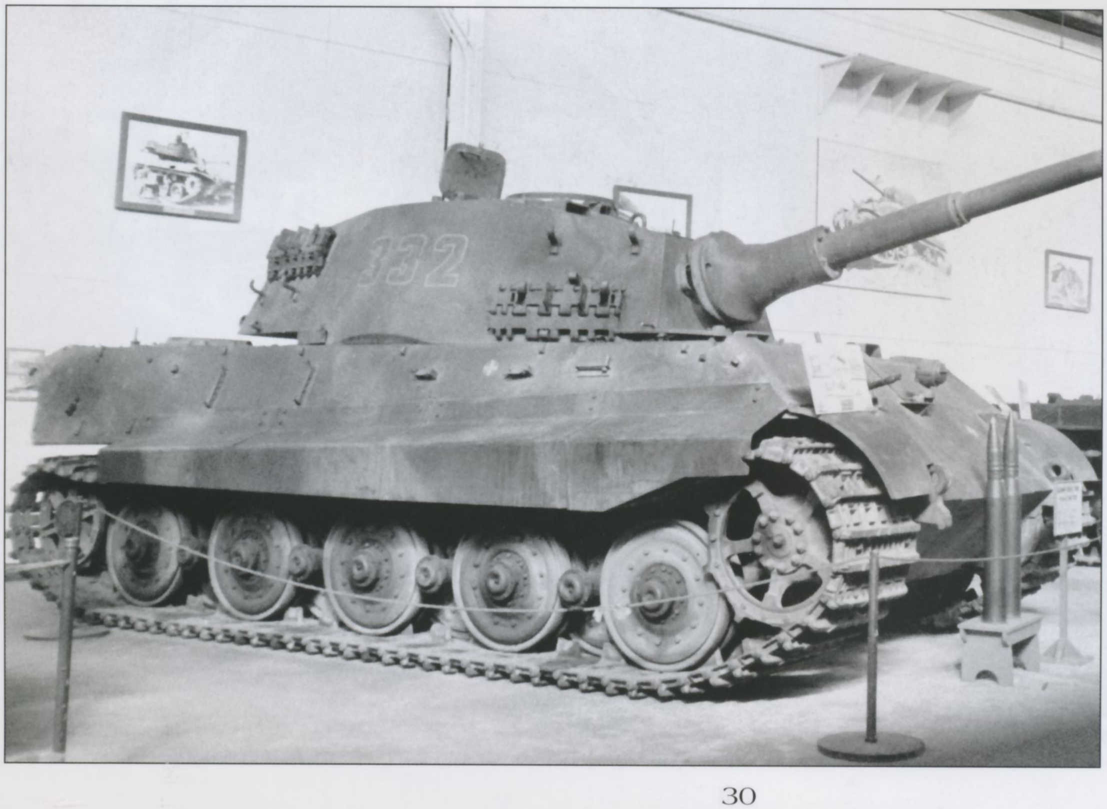
A view inside the right side of Kingtiger “332” showing the mounting for the coaxial machine gun which is missing in this view.



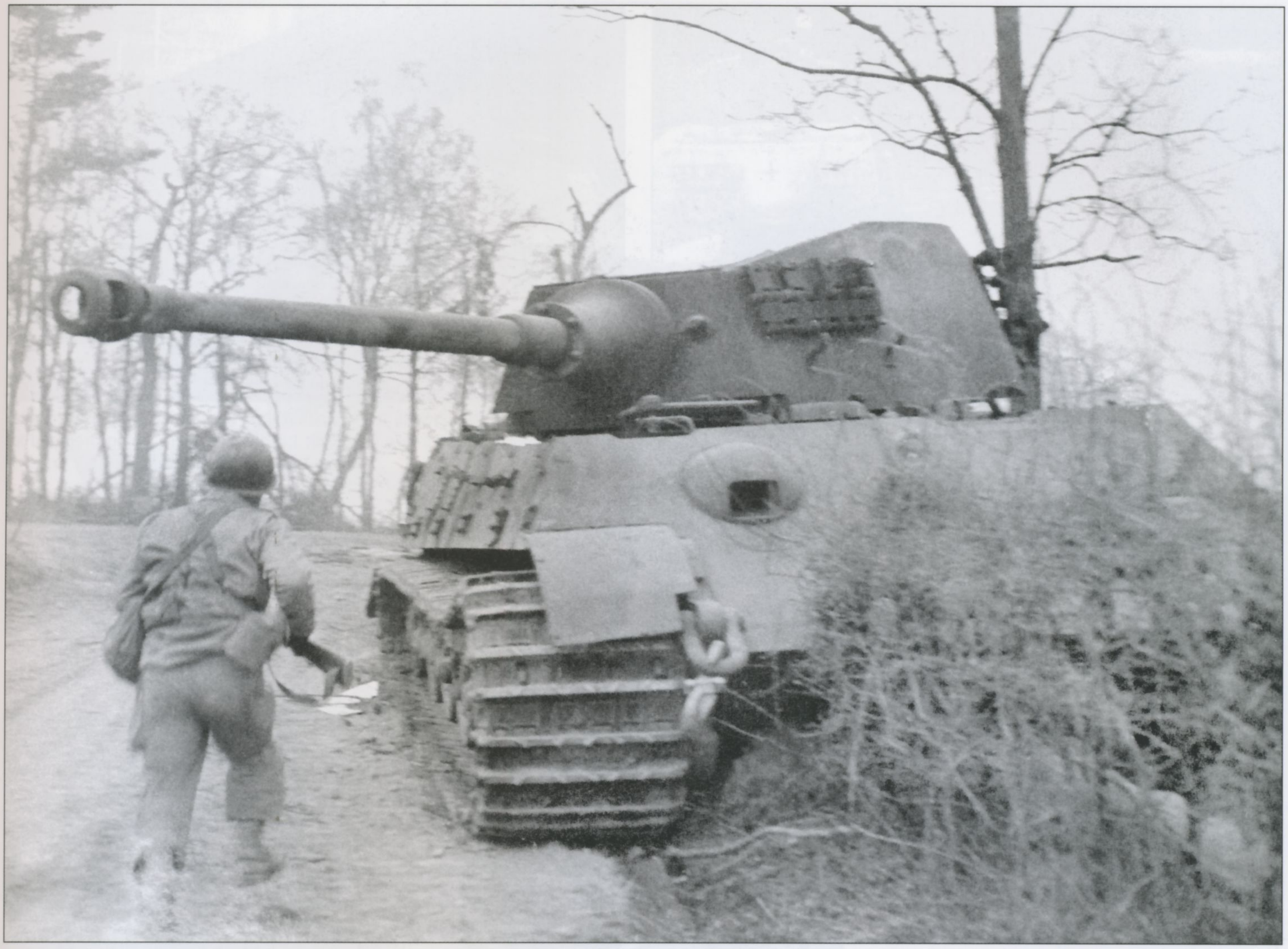
A view looking into Kingtiger “332” through the rear access hatch.

An interior view of the left rear of the turret showing the ammunition racks.

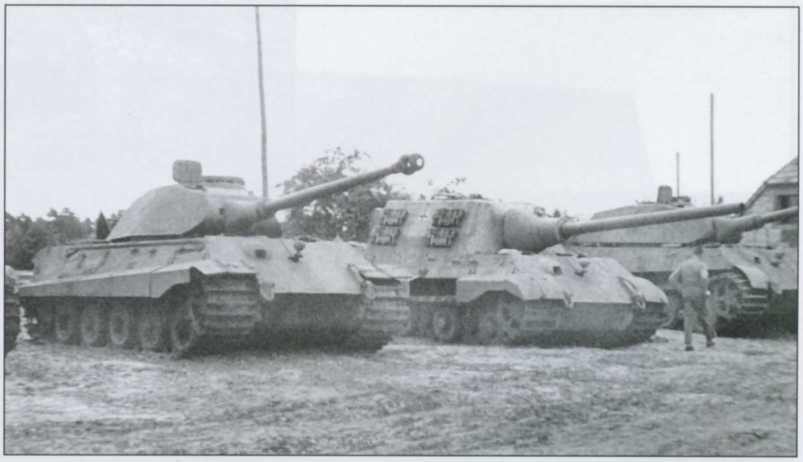




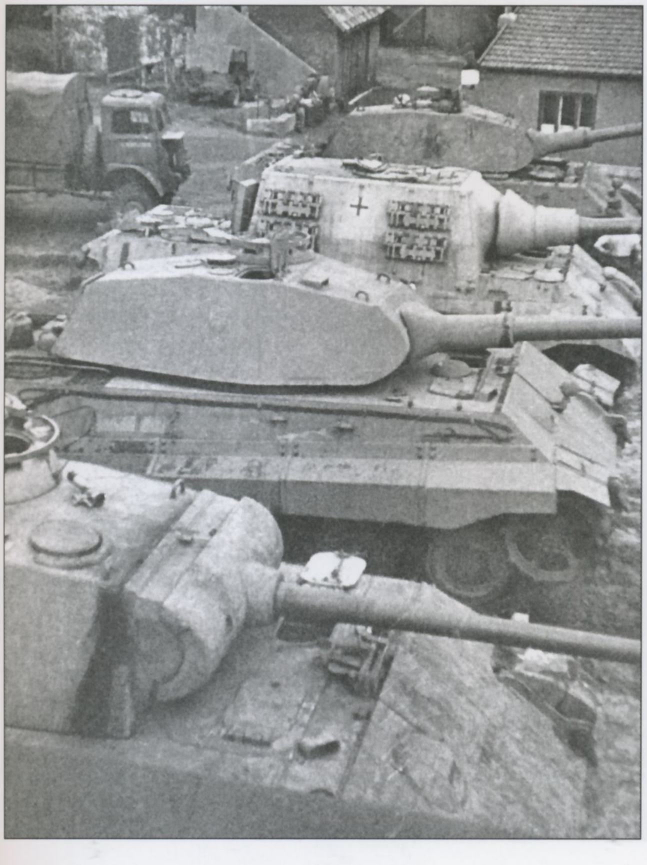
Kingtiger “332” shortly after the war on display at Aberdeen Proving Ground.



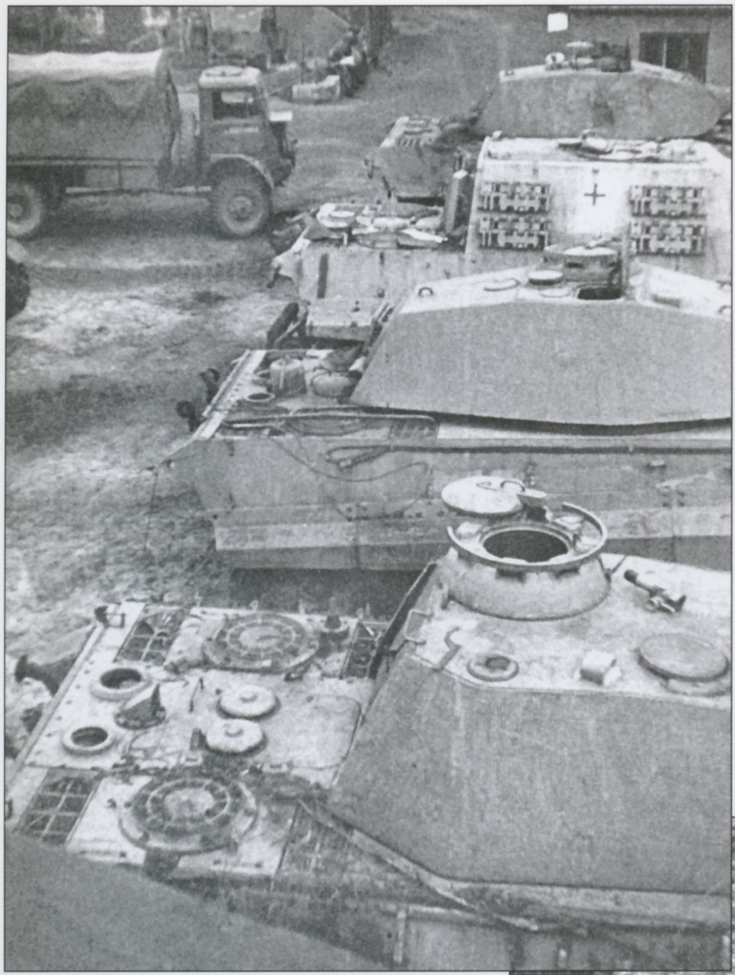
A US infantryman rushes by a knocked out Kingtiger near Weverousch, Germany on 27 March 1945. An internal explosion has blown off the turret roof.



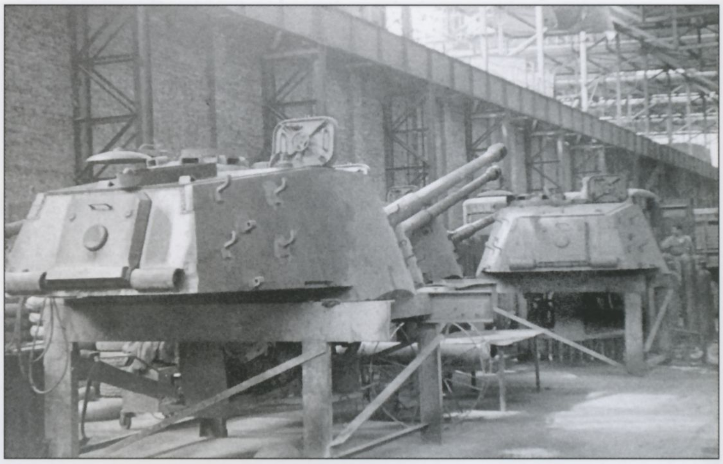
The Henschel proving ground near Haustenbeck had a pair of early production Kingtigers and a Jagdtiger pilot when visited by a US Army Ordnance team after the war.



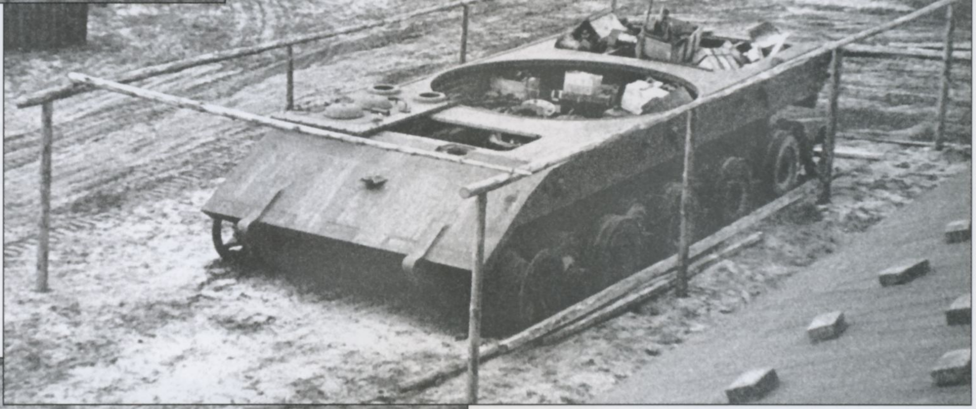
A Panther and two early production Kingtigers were also located at Henschel's Haustenbeck proving ground.



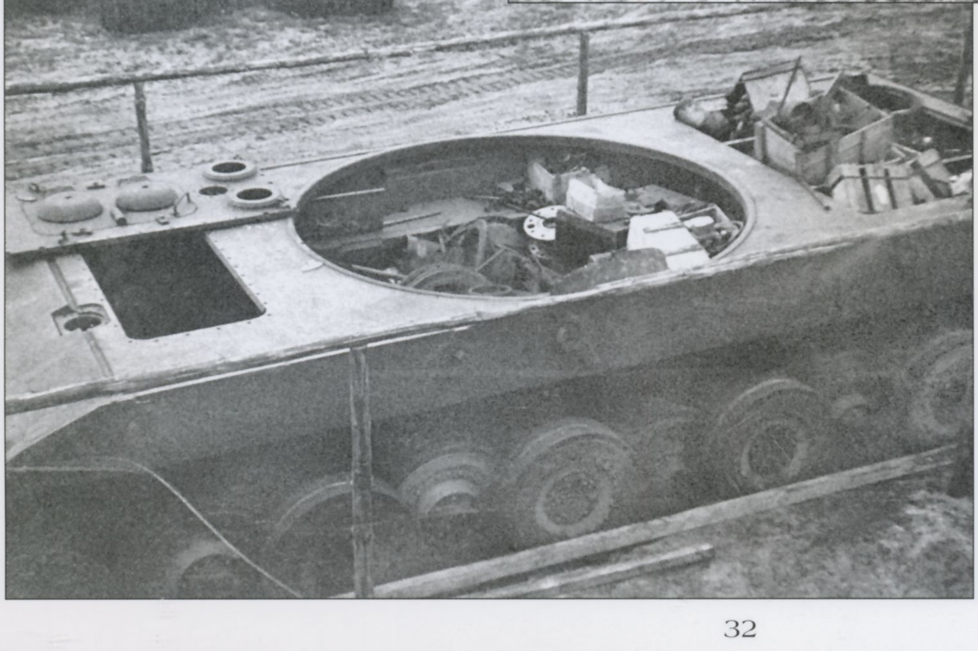
Another view of the Panther and Kingtigers at Haustenbeck shows details of the engine deck.



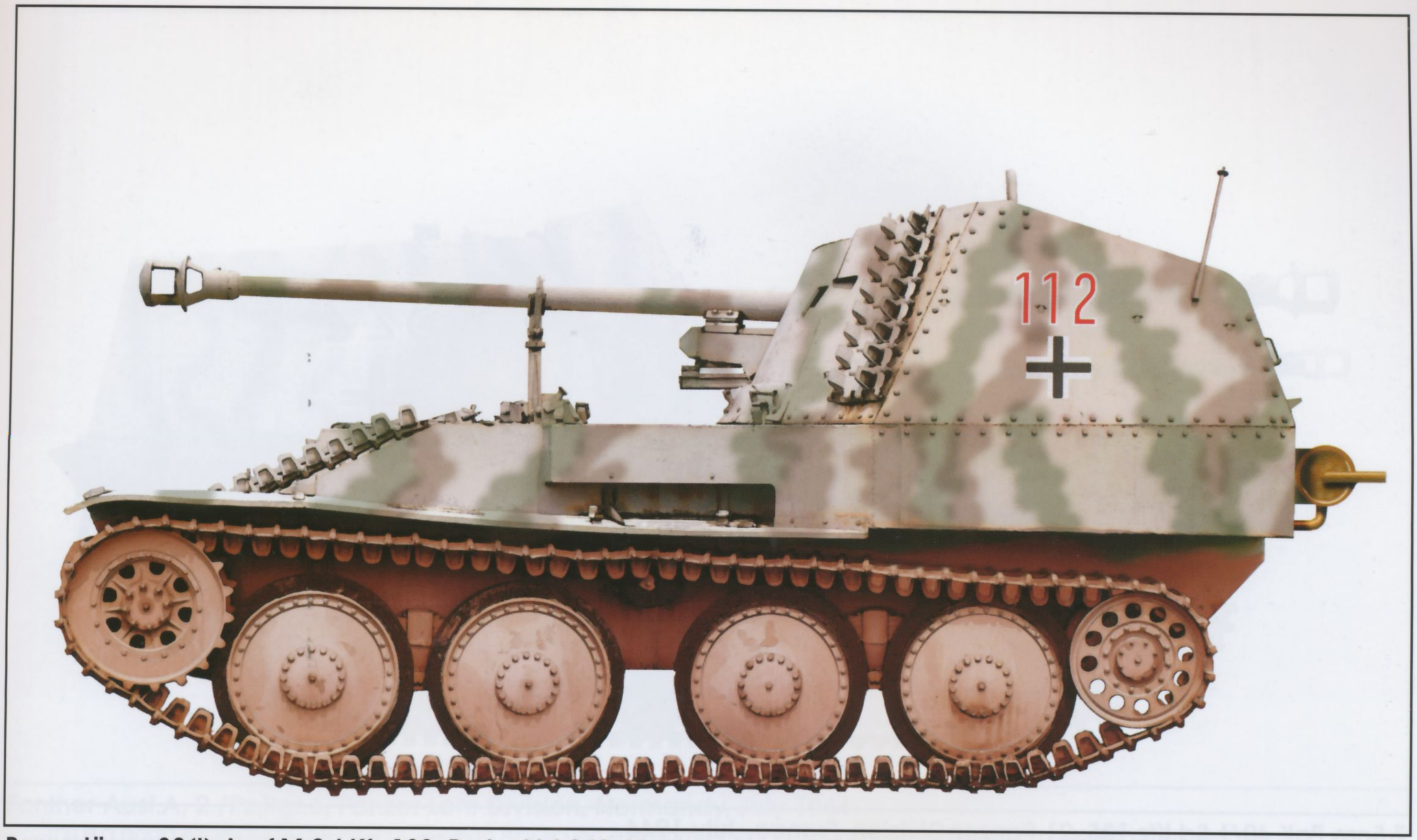
A technical intelligence team visiting the Henschel plant in Kassel after the war photographed these Kingtiger turrets that were being prepared for mounting on hulls.



The prototype for the incomplete E-100 super-heavy tank was also located at the Haustenbeck proving ground and is seen here in its final state.

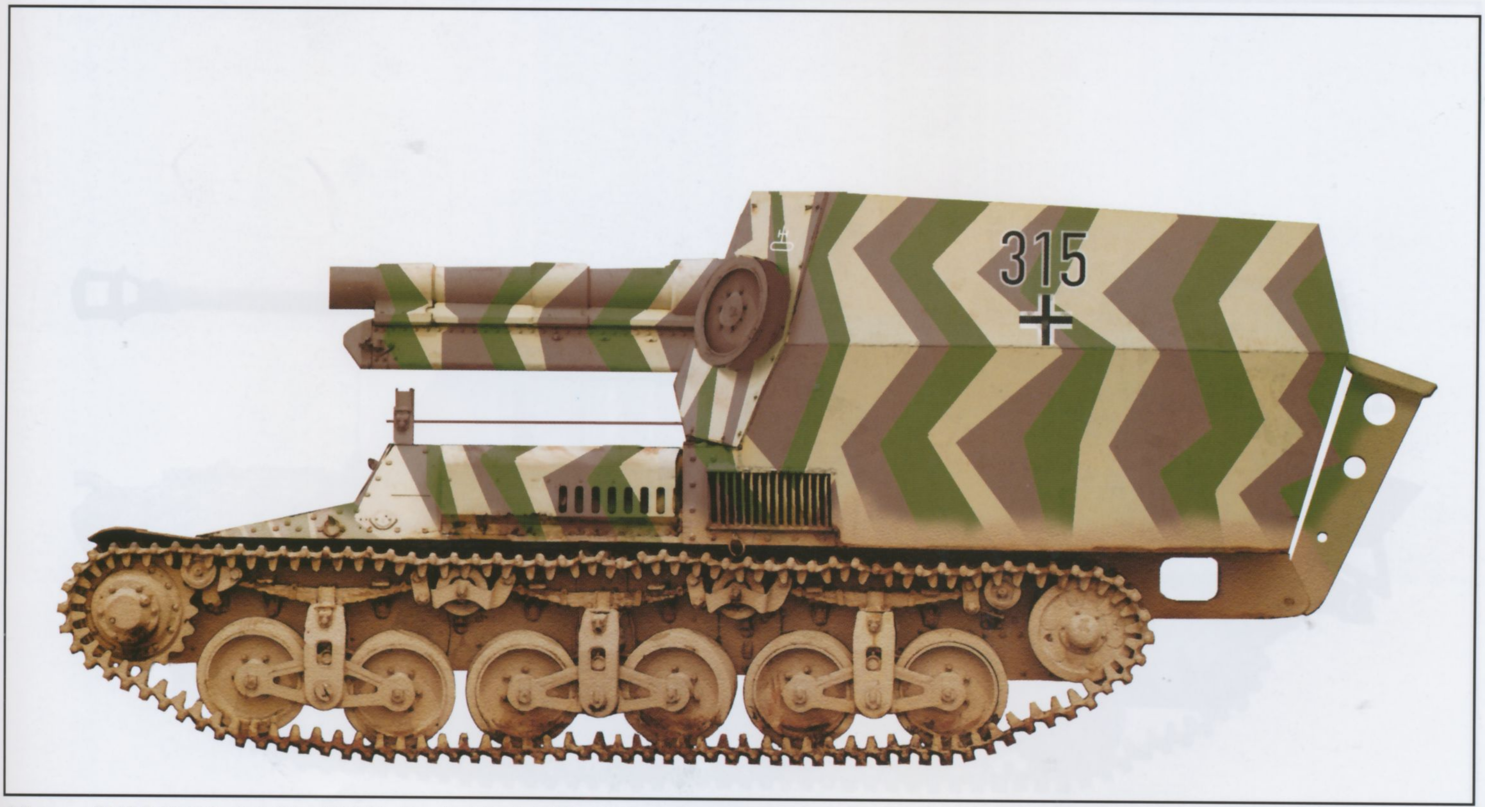


This close-up view of the E-100 super-heavy tank program shows how far the vehicle was from completion at the end of the war.



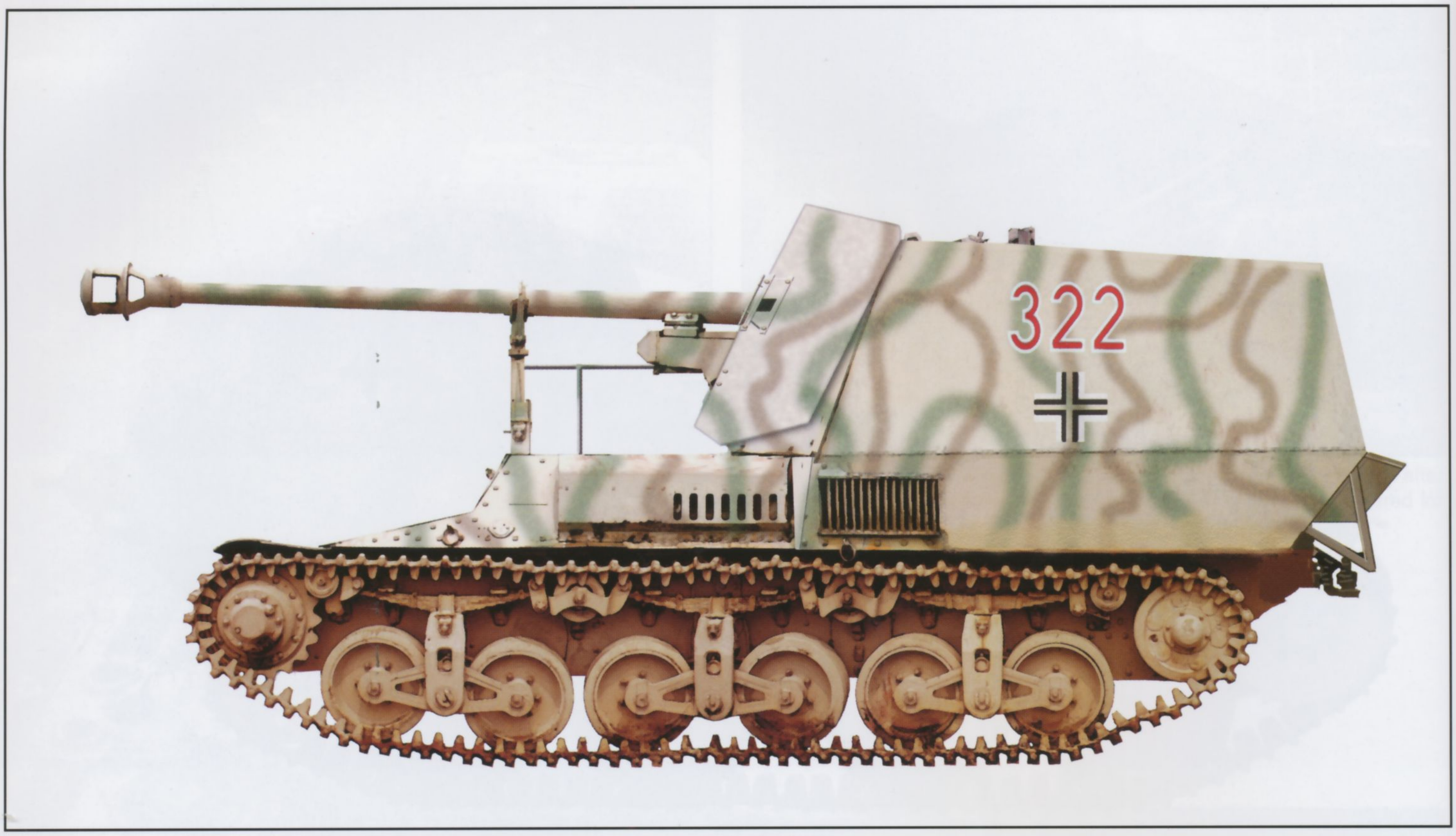
Panzerjäger 38(t) Ausf.M Sd.Kfz.138, Pz.Jg.Abt.243, Normandy, June 1944

This is another example of the typical summer 1944 paint scheme of factory applied RAL 7028 dark yellow with field applied patterns of RAL 6003 olive green and RAL 8017 dark brown. Once again, the camouflage pattern has been applied with field mixed paint, and the results are somewhat muted, no doubt subdued even further by the usual coat of dust.



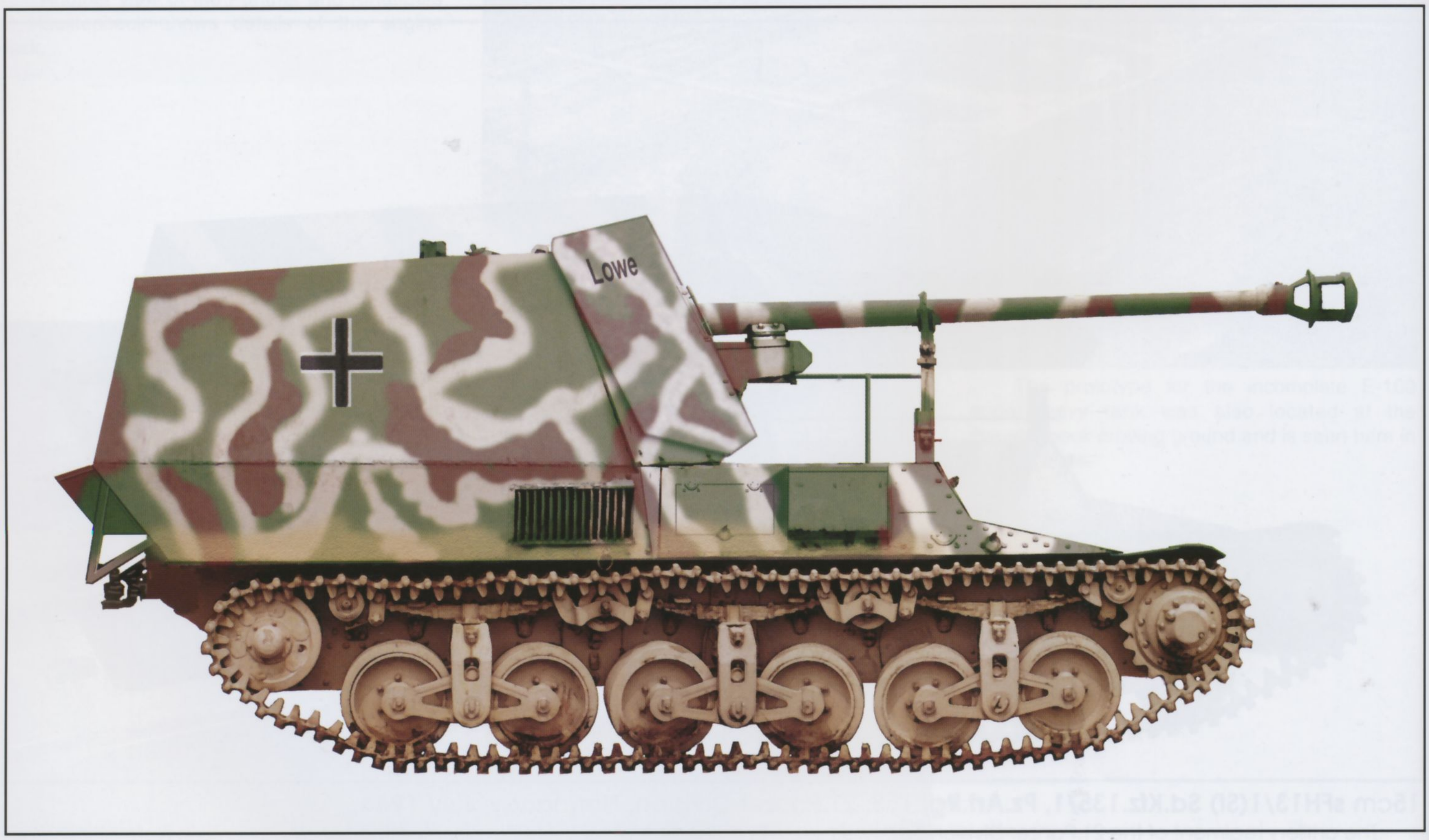
15cm sFH13/1(Sf) Sd.Kfz.135/1, Pz.Art.Rgt.155, 21.Panzer-Division, Normandy, July 1944

The artillery regiment of the 21.Panzer-Division had two batteries of self-propelled 15cm howitzers on the Lorraine chassis in Normandy. When delivered from Germany in 1943, they were finished in overall dark grey, but were repainted in 1944 prior to the invasion. The scheme as seen here is quite distinctive and not the usual amorphous sprayed pattern so common on German AFVs in Normandy. Besides the Balkan cross and tactical number on the superstructure side, the self-propelled gun battery tactical symbol can be seen in white on the front superstructure plate.



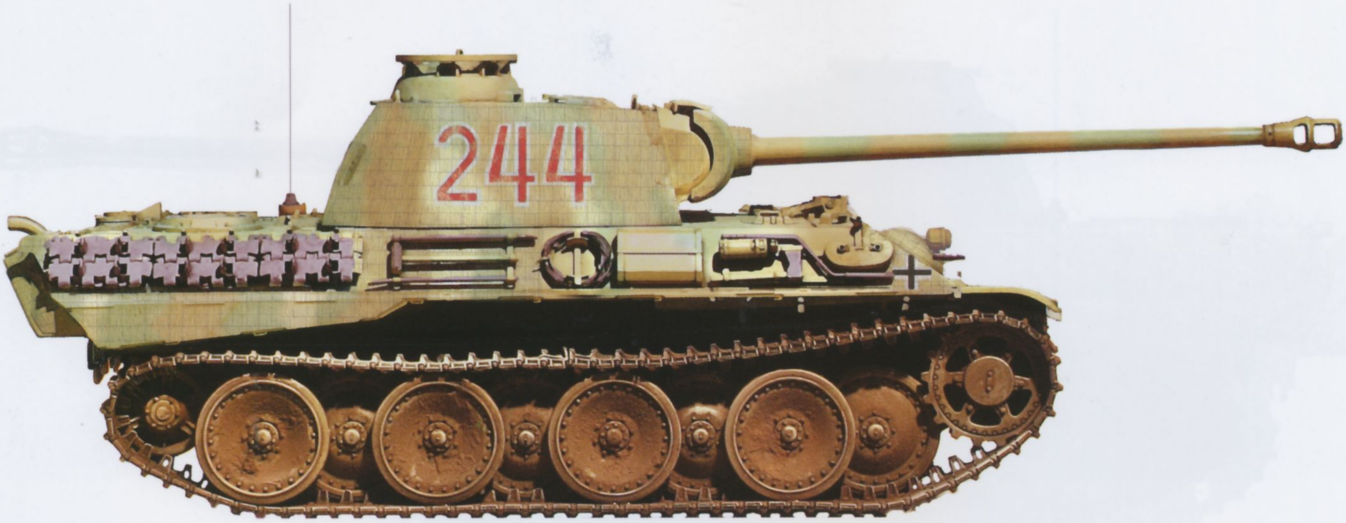
7.5cm PaK 40/1 Sd.Kfz.135, 21.Panzer-Division, France, July 1944

The camouflage schemes on the Becker self-propelled gun conversions of the 21.Panzer-Division were often quite distinctive as seen here. These tank destroyers were deployed in the division's panzer-grenadier battalions and the camouflage seems to have varied from battery to battery. In this case, the dark green and dark brown have been sprayed in wavy bands over the usual dark yellow, somewhat obscured by the usual summertime dust. The style of Balkan cross is not typical.



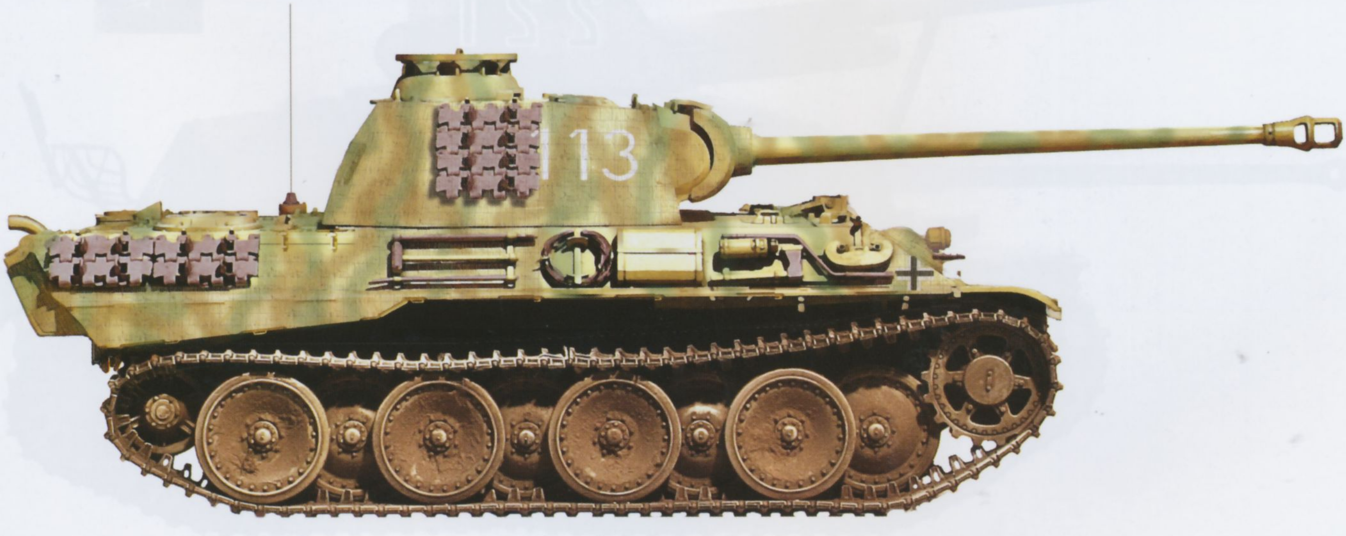
7.5cm PaK 40/1 Sd.Kfz.135, 21.Panzer-Division, France, July 1944

This provides another example of the variety of schemes applied to the Becker self-propelled gun conversions in France. This particular example is named Lowe (Lion). Since these vehicles were originally finished in overall dark grey, the unit has used the opportunity to repaint the vehicle with a larger percentage of dark green than was usually found in the summer 1944 patterns in Normandy.



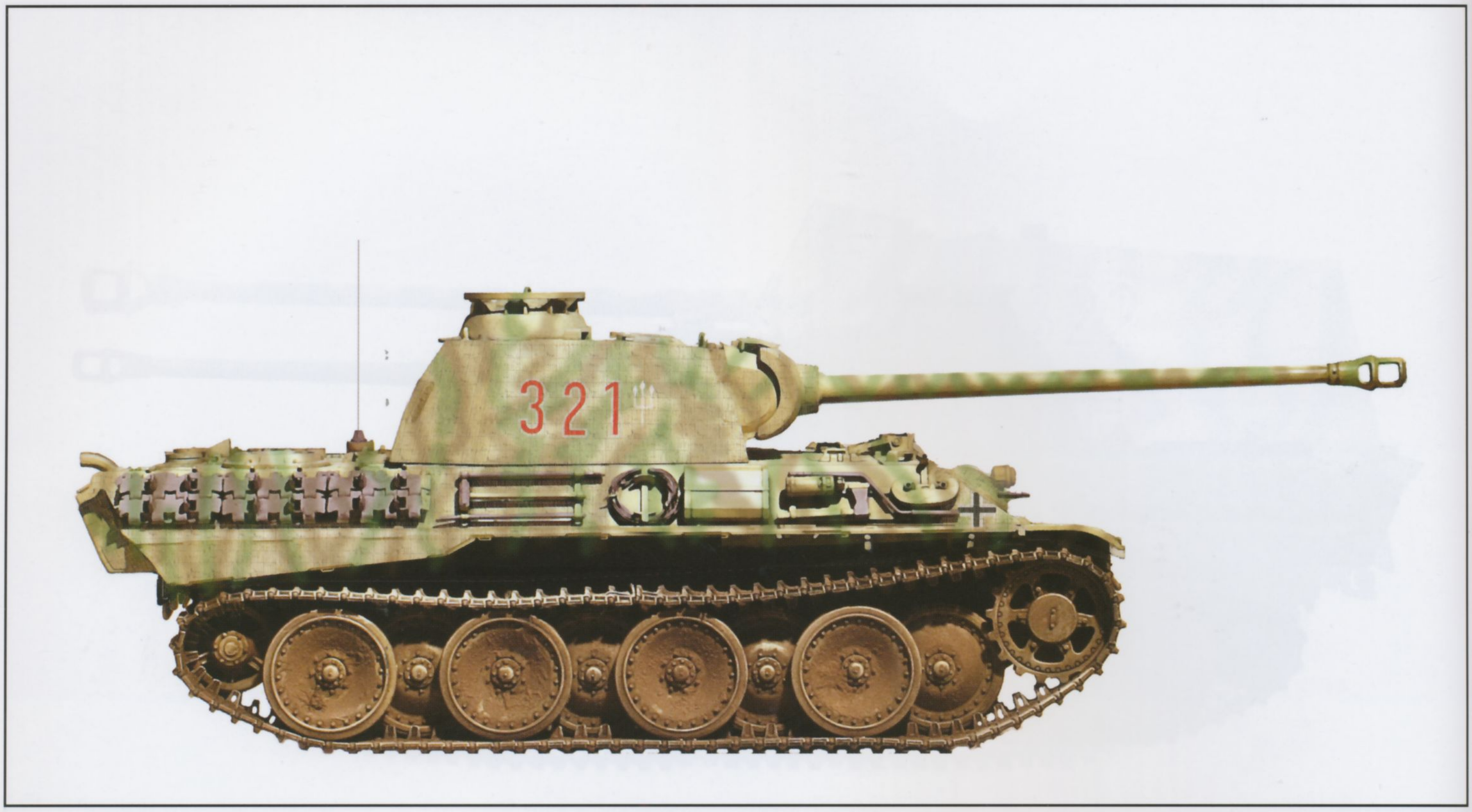
Panther Ausf.A, 2./Pz.Rgt.6, Panzer Lehr Division, Normandy, July 1944

This is a good example of the typical German AFV scheme in Normandy of factory applied RAL 7028 dark yellow with field applied patterns of RAL 6003 olive green and RAL 8017 dark brown. The field application and dust makes the pattern indistinct and much lighter than would be expected considering how dark the green and brown colors are in the original paste form. Panzer Regiment 6 tended to apply very large tactical numbers on the turret, and these were repeated on the turret rear as well. This particular Panther was captured by US forces and later sent to Aberdeen Proving Ground for trials.



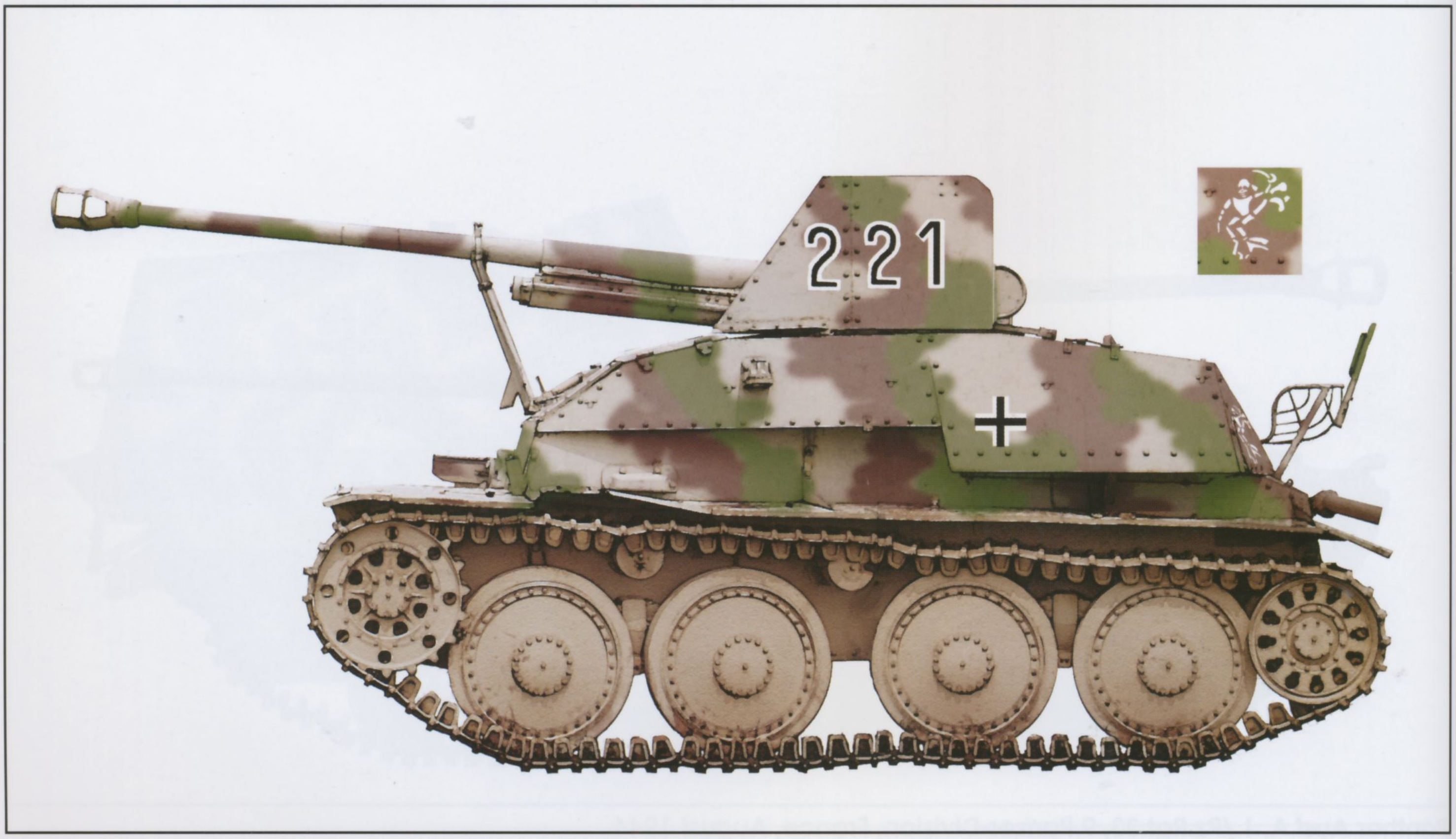
Panther Ausf.A, 1./Pz.Rgt.33, 9.Panzer-Division, France, August 1944

This is another example of the typical summer 1944 paint scheme of factory applied RAL 7028 dark yellow with field applied patterns of RAL 6003 olive green and RAL 8017 dark brown. The spray-painted pattern is not particularly distinct in contemporary photos due to the field-mixed dilution of the pigment in the solvent and the usual coverage of dust. Panzer Regiment 33 used simple white tactical numbers in the summer of 1944, and in this case, the first digit has been partly painted on the spare track links on the turret.



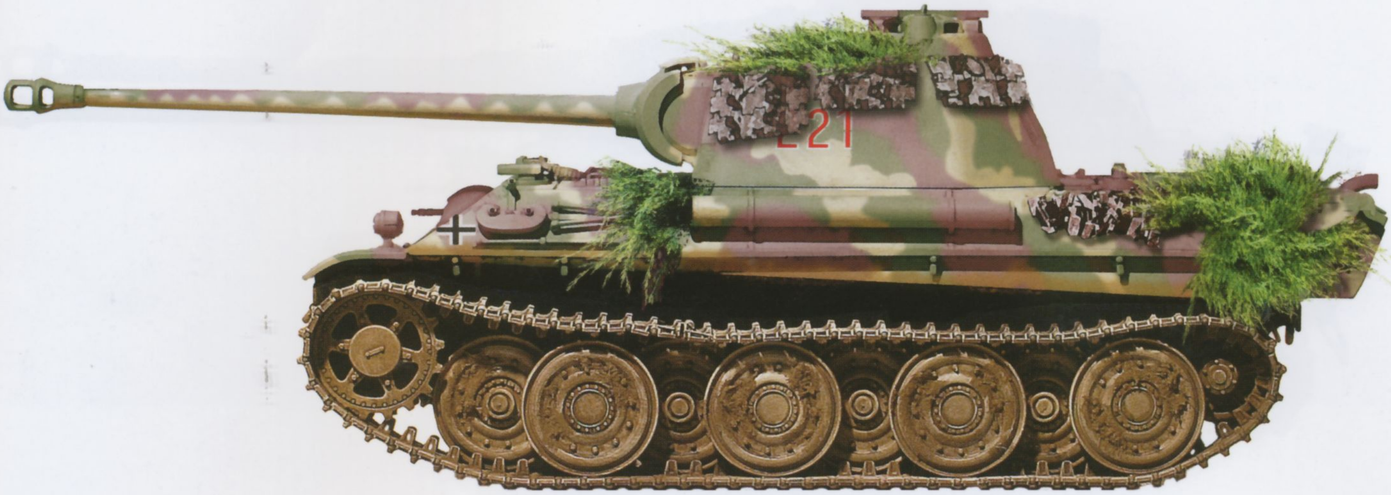
Panther Ausf.A, 3./Pz.Rgt.3, 2.Panzer-Division, Normandy, August 1944

This is a good example of typical German AFV camouflage in the summer of 1944 consisting of the usual German scheme of factory applied RAL 7028 dark yellow with field applied patterns of RAL 6003 olive green and RAL 8017 dark brown. The two latter colors were provided to the crew in the form of a pigment paste which was thinned with any available solvent and spray-painted on at the discretion of the unit. As a result, there were no standard patterns and the scheme varied from tank to tank. Since the paint was created in the field using available solvents, it was often not very opaque. The 2.Panzer-Division used a trident as the divisional tactical symbol, and it is seen here on the turret side in front of the tactical number.



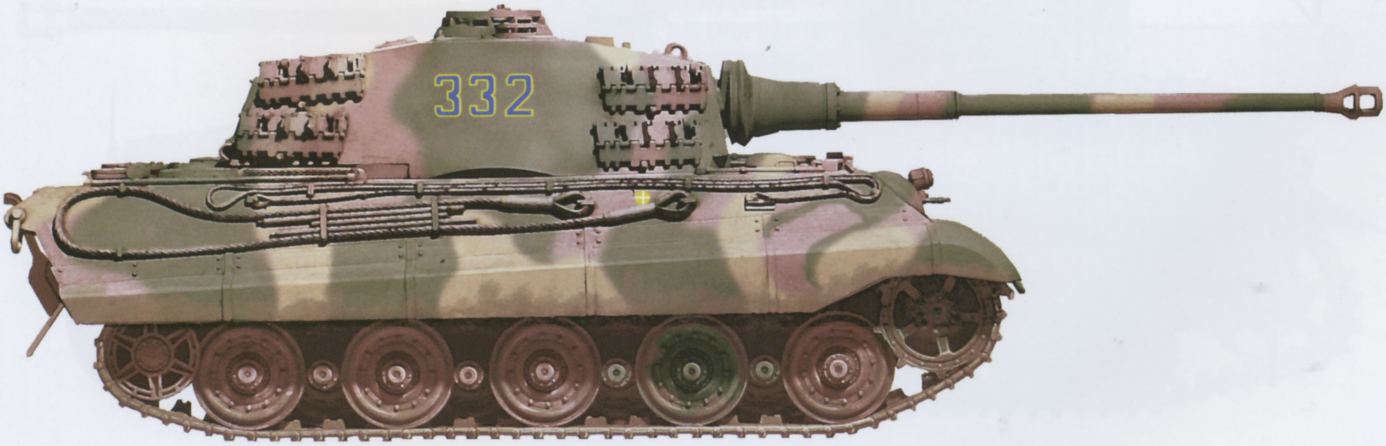
Panzerjäger 38(t) Sd.Kfz.139, Pz.Jg.Abt.61, 11.Panzer-Division, Montelimar, France, August 1944

This is a fairly good example of the summer 1944 camouflage scheme applied in a more distinctive pattern than seen in other units. The 11.Panzer-Division's "galloping ghost" tactical insignia was stenciled on the rear corners of the hull and is seen in more detail in the inset drawing above.



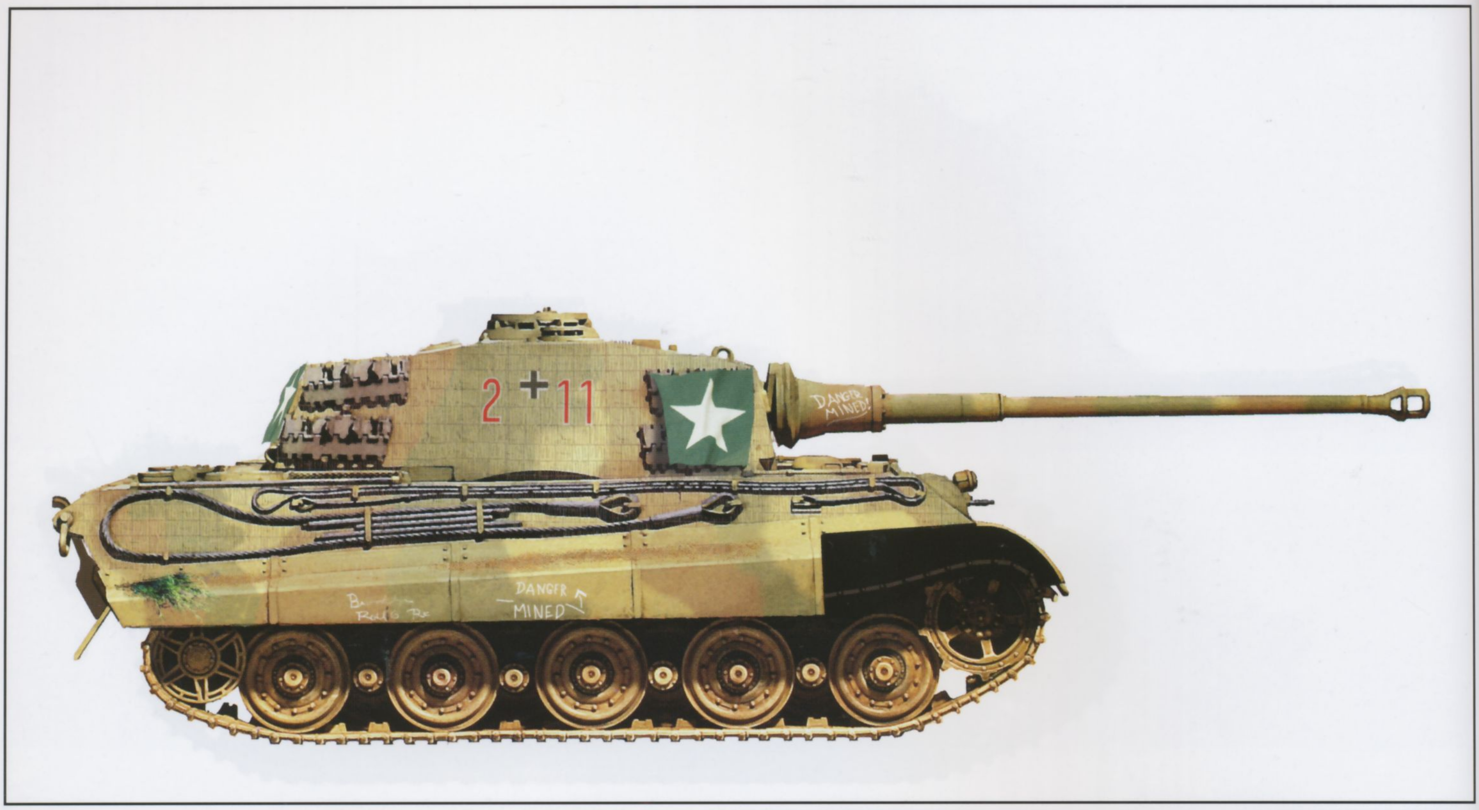
Panther Ausf.G, 2./Pz.Rgt.1, Kampfgruppe Peiper, 1.SS-Panzer-Division, La Gleize, Belgium, December 1944

The improvised nature of camouflage painting of German AFVs was abandoned in the autumn of 1944 in favor of factory applied camouflage patterns. Due to paint shortages, the initial plan in September 1944 was to use the existing coating of red lead primer as the base color, with a pattern of dark yellow and green applied to this to conserve paint. The camouflage scheme here is typical of factory-painted Panthers manufactured in September-October 1944.



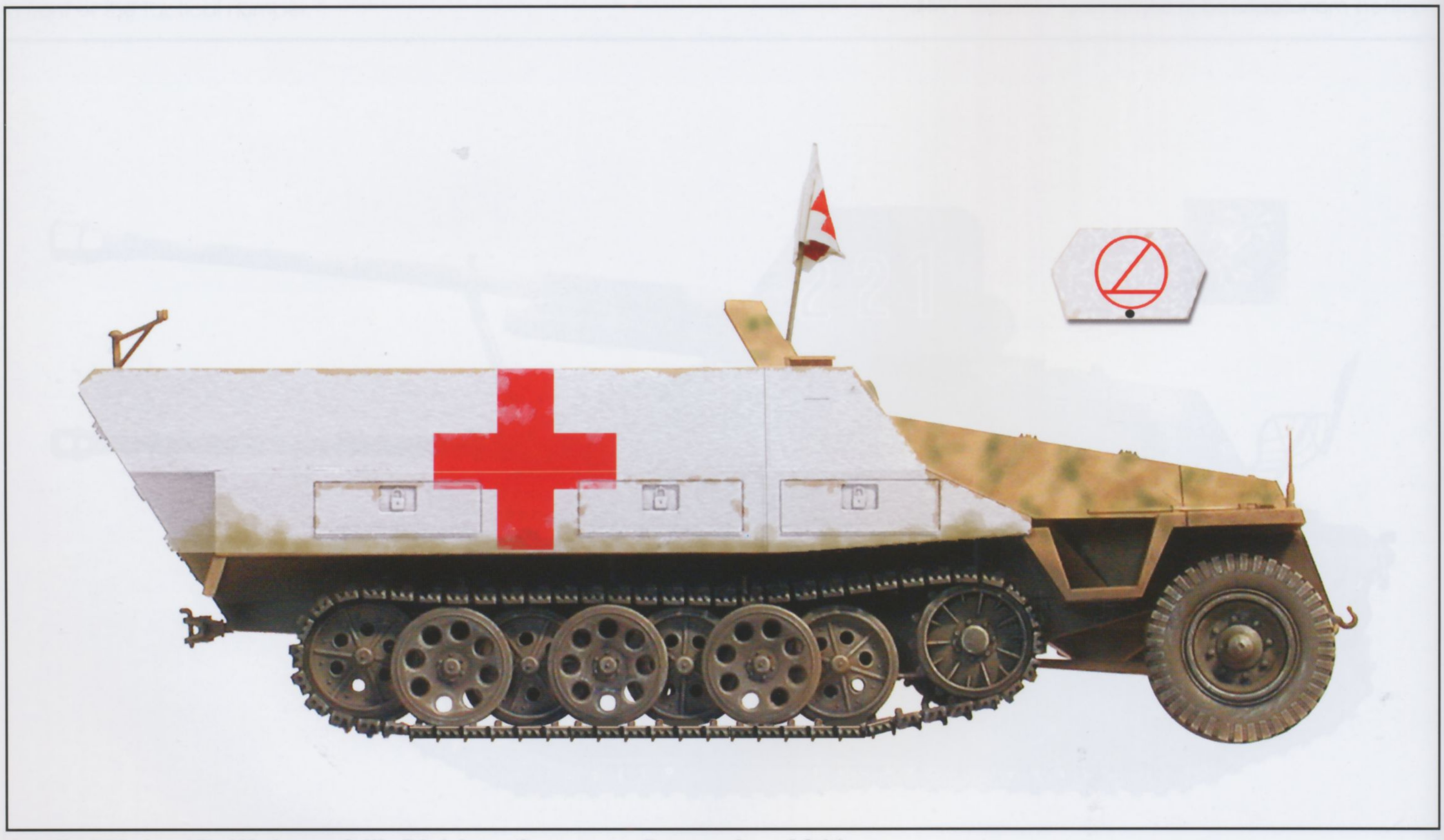
Kingtiger, s.Pz.Abt.501, Kampfgruppe Peiper, 1.SS-Panzer-Division, Belgium, December 1944

This is another example of the late war camouflage scheme of dark green and dark yellow applied over the red lead primer. Some of the Kingtigers serving with this unit were originally issued to s.Pz.Abt.509 which accounts for the unit's tactical insignia, a small yellow circle with white cross, still evident on the hull side. This tank was abandoned in La Gleize and recovered by US Ordnance. It was shipped back to Aberdeen Proving Grounds and currently resides at the Patton Museum in Ft. Knox.



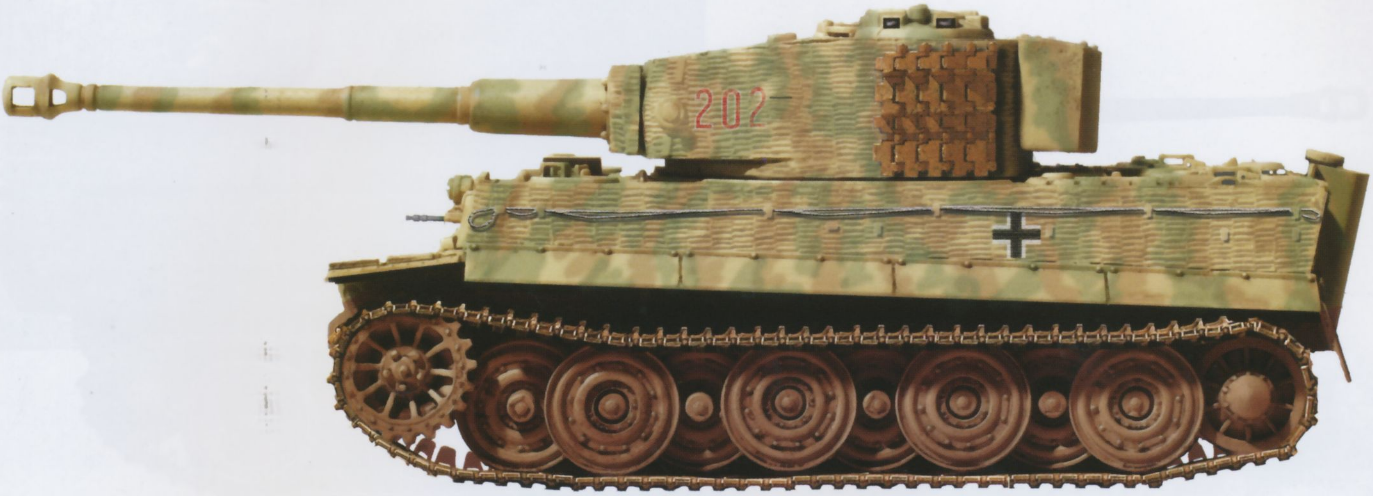
Kingtiger, US Army Co. B/129th Ordnance Battalion, December 1944

This Kingtiger of 2./s.Pz.Abt.506 was captured by US troops during the fighting along the German frontier in December 1944. Company B of the 129th Ordnance Battalion put it back into running order and pulled it back deeper behind US lines for technical evaluation. The tank is in typical summer 1944 camouflage, and displays the usual s.Pz.Abt.506 tactical numbering with the company number to one side of the Balkan cross. The US troops draped improvised US insignia on the tank made from cloth. Also evident are usual chalk inscriptions warning passing troops to stay off the tank in case it was booby-trapped.



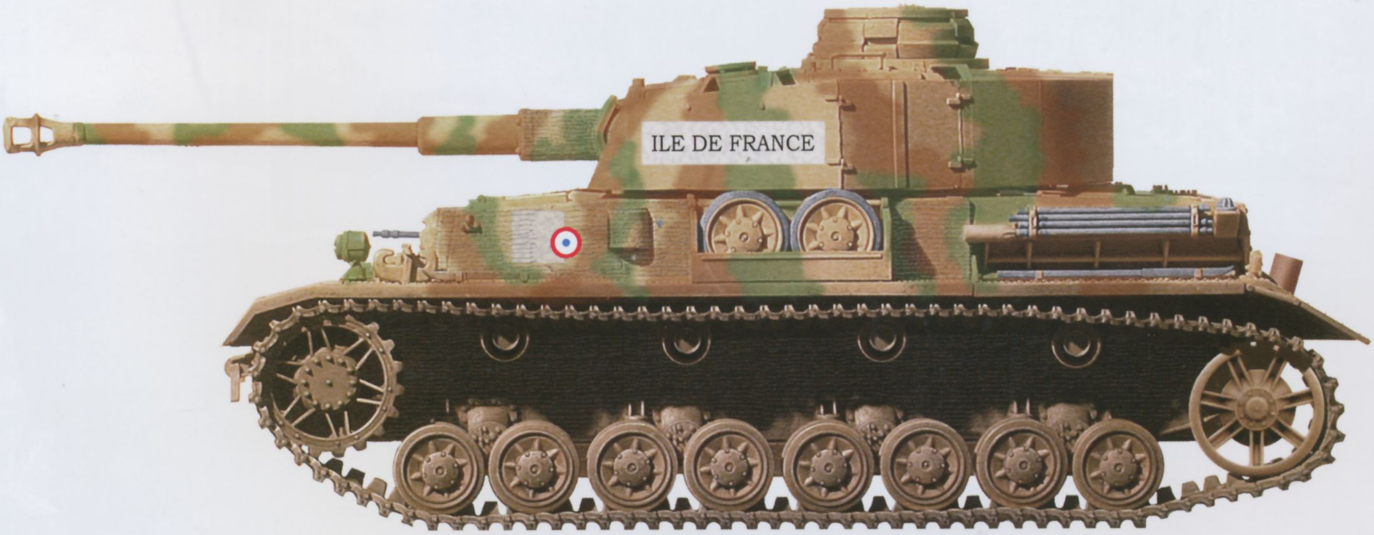
Sd.Kfz.251 Ausf.D, US Army 84th Division, Germany, December 1944

Captured German half-tracks were sometimes used by US Army infantry divisions, and in this particular case, it has been attached to a medical unit of the 84th Division during the fighting along the German frontier in December 1944. The rear sides have been painted white and a prominent Red Cross applied. The bow plate has also been repainted as seen in the inset drawing, and the divisional insignia, a simplified version of the division's "rail-splitter" arm patch, has been painted on to it.



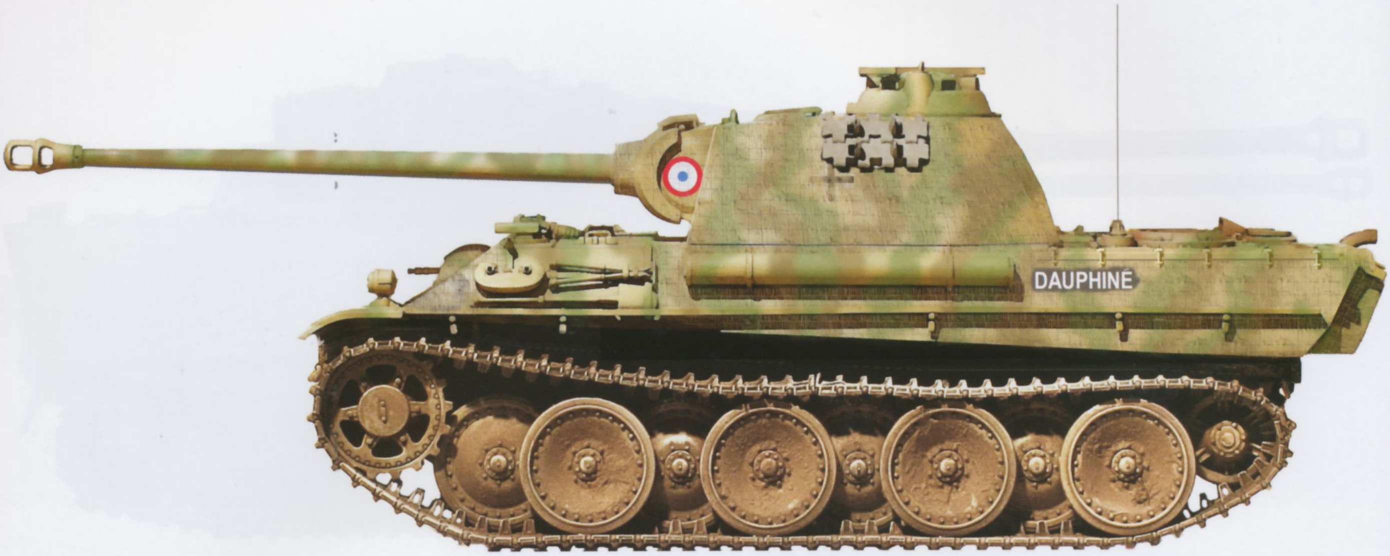
Tiger I, 4./s.Pz.Abt.506, Elsdorf, Germany, February 1945

An improvised Tiger unit called Kompanie Hummel was hastily formed in July 1944 and fought in the Netherlands and along the German frontier. As can be seen here, their vehicles were in the typical summer 1944 field-applied camouflage finish. In mid-December, it was attached as the 4th company of s.Pz.Abt.506 which was equipped with Kingtigers. This particular Tiger I knocked out a T26E3 Pershing of the 3rd Armored Division on 26 February 1945, but while attempting to withdraw was immobilized and abandoned. Although attached as the 4th company to s.Pz.Abt.506, some of its Tigers retained earlier tactical numbers as seen here.



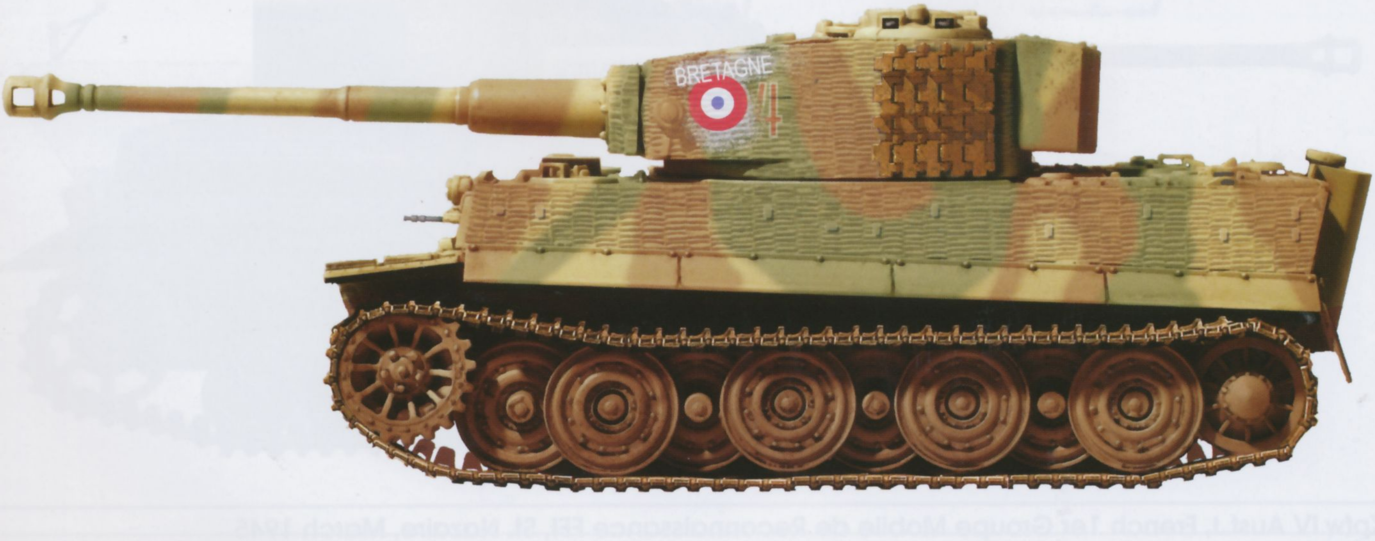
Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.J, French 1er Groupe Mobile de Reconnaissance FFI, St. Nazaire, March 1945

When German garrisons along the French coast were isolated in the summer of 1944 such as at St. Nazaire, the US Army left behind token forces to keep them isolated, reinforced by units of the French resistance (FFI). The FFI units at St. Nazaire formed a small armored detachment in September 1944, and in March 1945 managed to scrape up a variety of captured German armored vehicles in Normandy. This Pz.Kpfw.IV was renamed "Ile de France", and the French tricolor cocarde was painted on the hull side. A total of eleven Pz.Kpfw.IVs were in use by the unit in the spring of 1945 prior to the German surrender.



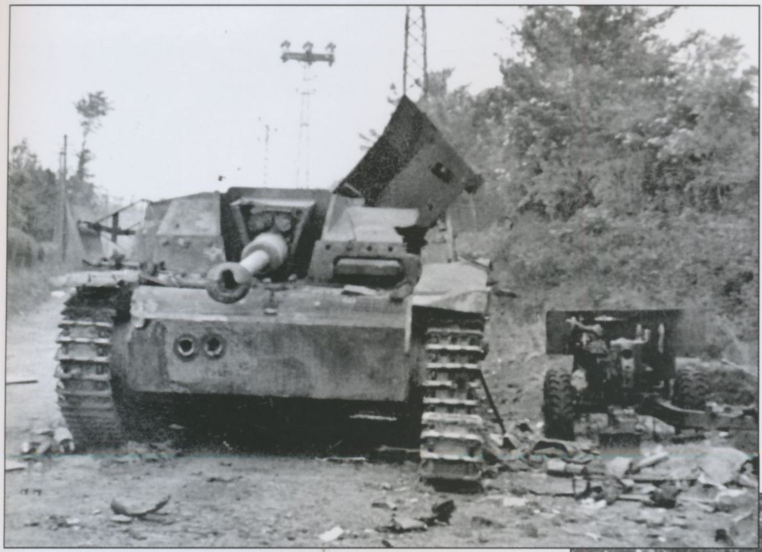
Panther Ausf.G, French 1er Groupe Mobile de Reconnaissance FFI, St. Nazaire, March 1945

The 1st GMR/FFI also found a single functional Panther in US Army ordnance yards in Normandy, which they christened "Dauphine". There are still traces of the German Balkan cross on the turret side, and a prominent French tri-color cocarde has been painted on the side of the gun trunnions

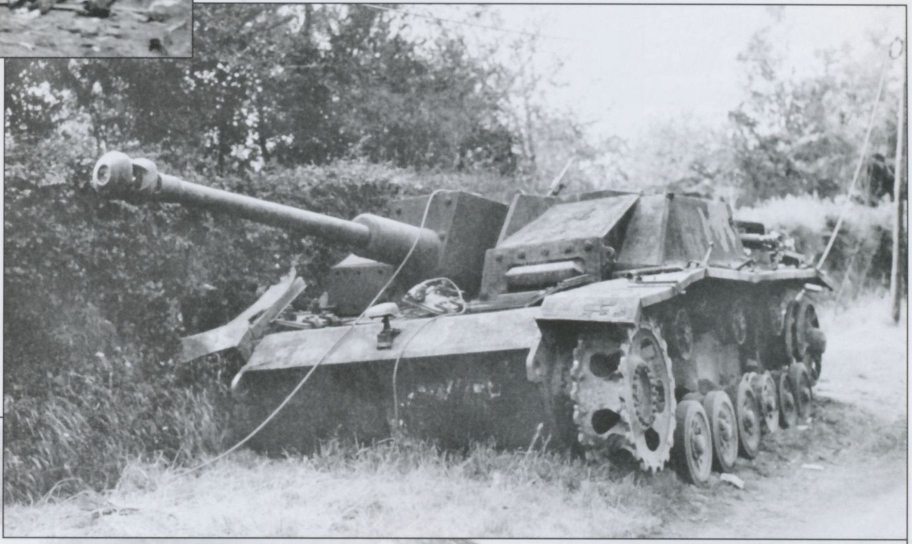


Tiger I, French 1er Groupe Mobile de Reconnaissance FFI, St. Nazaire, March 1945

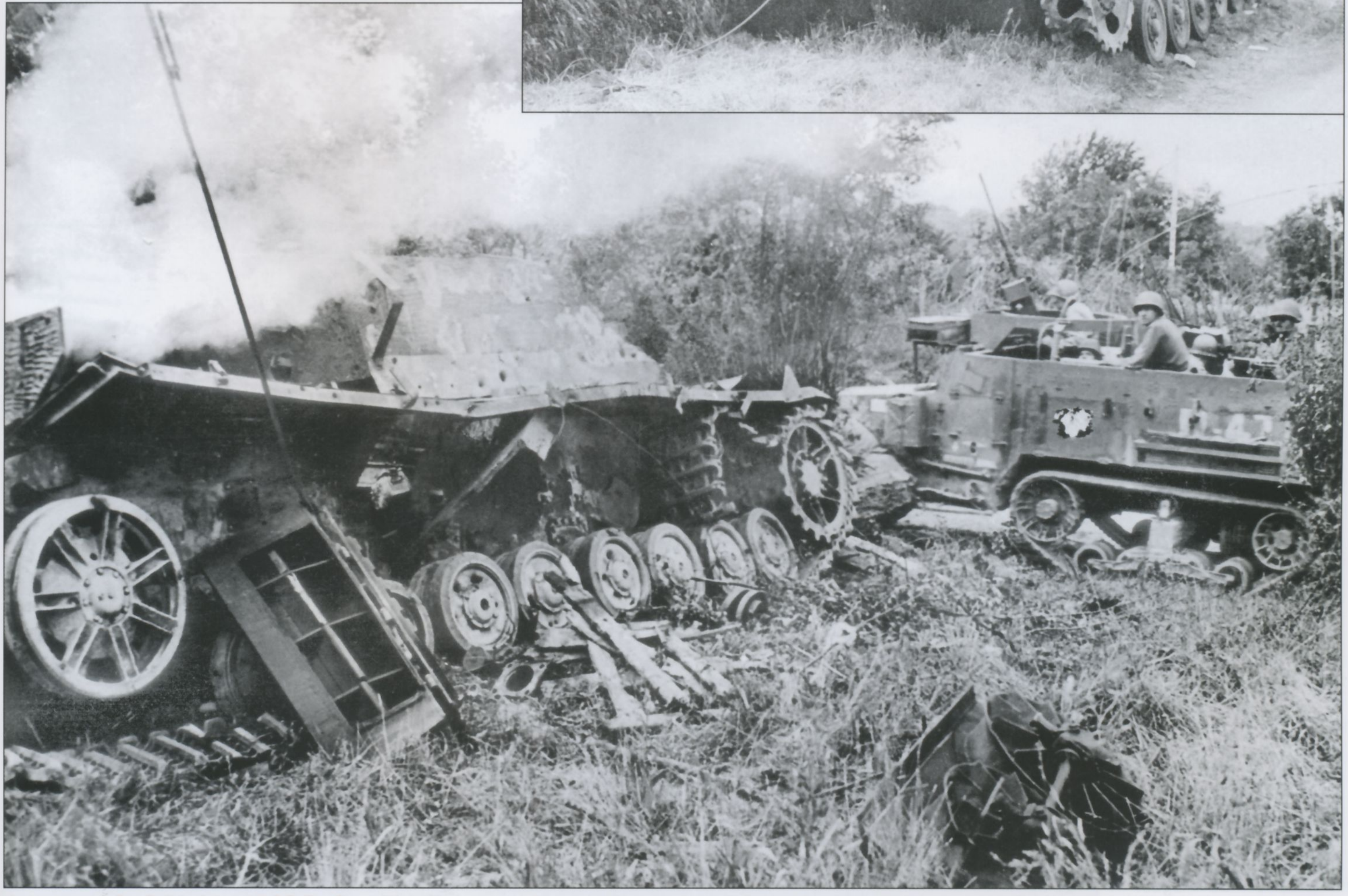
The 1st GMR/FFI had two Tigers in March 1945, a Tiger I and a Kingtiger. The Tiger I was renamed "Bretagne" as seen here and the French tricolor cocarde painted on the turret side. There is slight evidence of the original German tactical number on the turret side, ending in "4". These vehicles were mostly left in their original German colors.



A StuG III Ausf.G knocked out while supporting the Grenadier Regiment 1058 attacks on US paratroopers in St. Mere Eglise following the D-Day landings. This one was hit no fewer than four times, but from the size of the gouges on the bow, it was probably a victim of M4 tanks of the 746th Tank Battalion. An airborne 57mm anti-tank gun sits beside it.

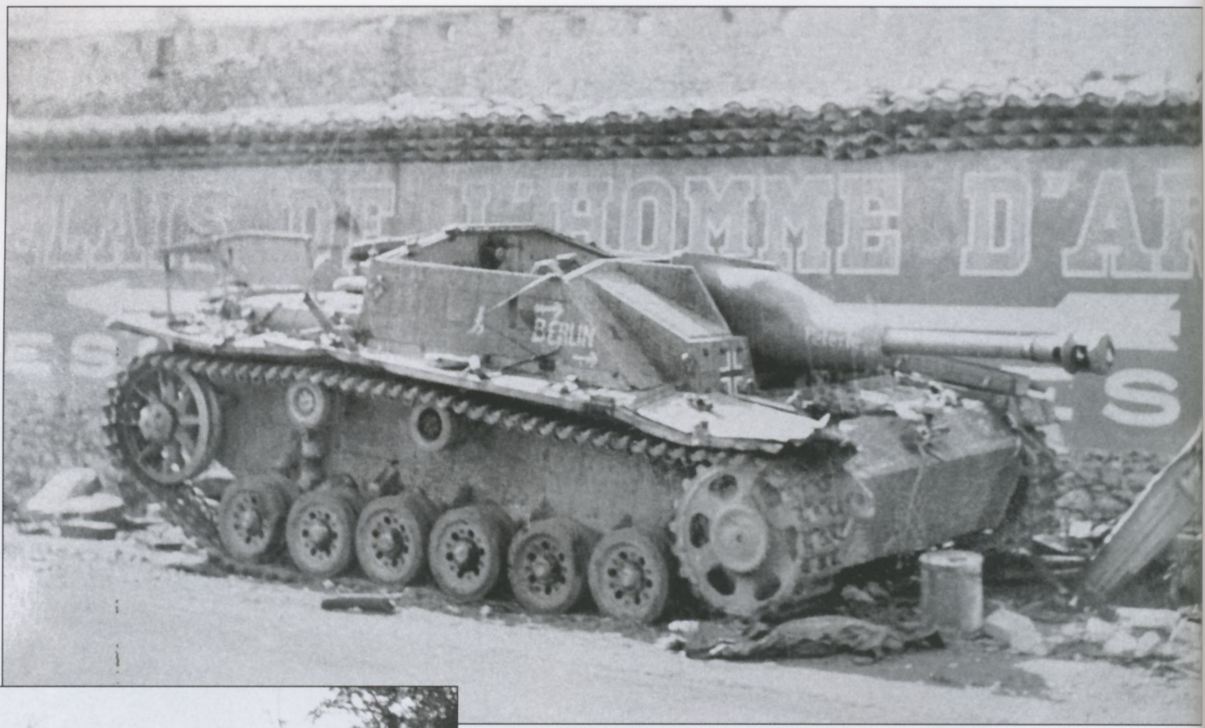


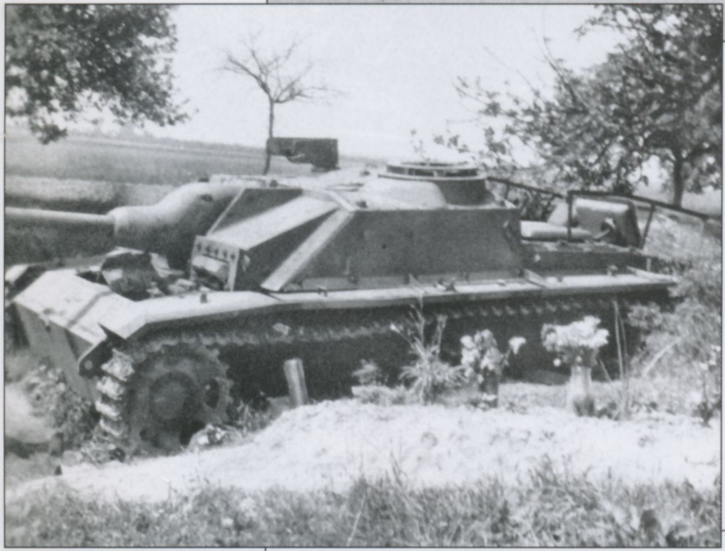
A StuG III Ausf.G found destroyed along the roadside in France in July 1944.



A destroyed StuG IV of the 17.SS-Pz.Gren.Division is passed by a half-track of the US 2nd Armored Division during Operation Cobra in late July 1944.

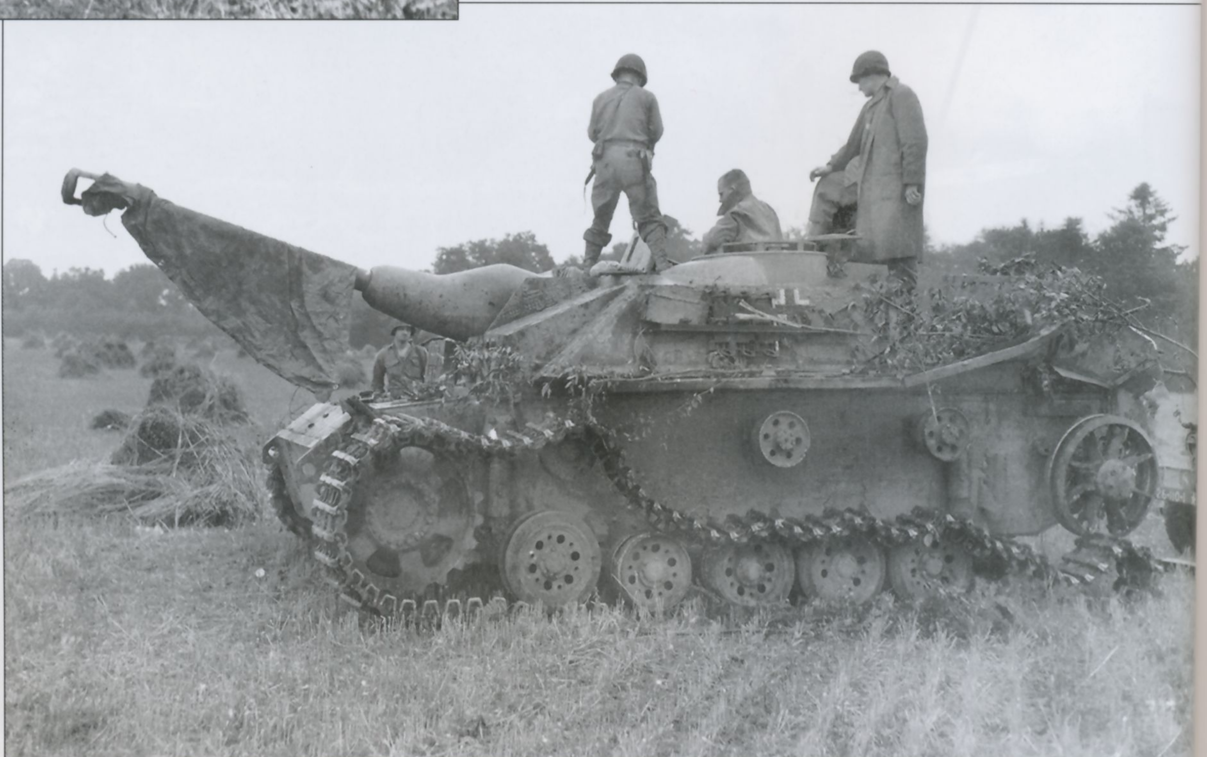
This StuG III was destroyed in L'Homme d'Armes, in southern France in the summer of 1944 following the US Seventh Army Operation Dragoon landings.

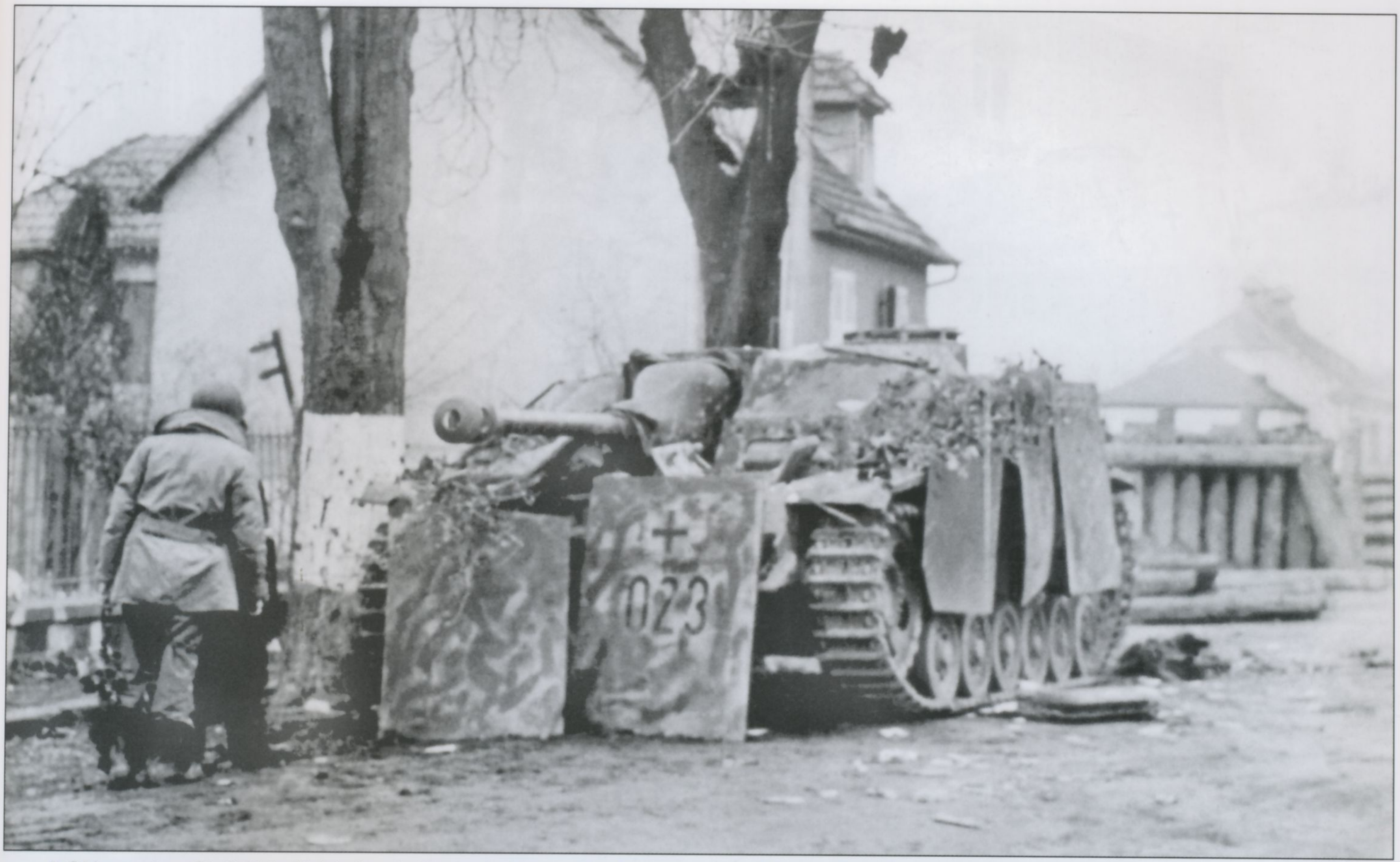




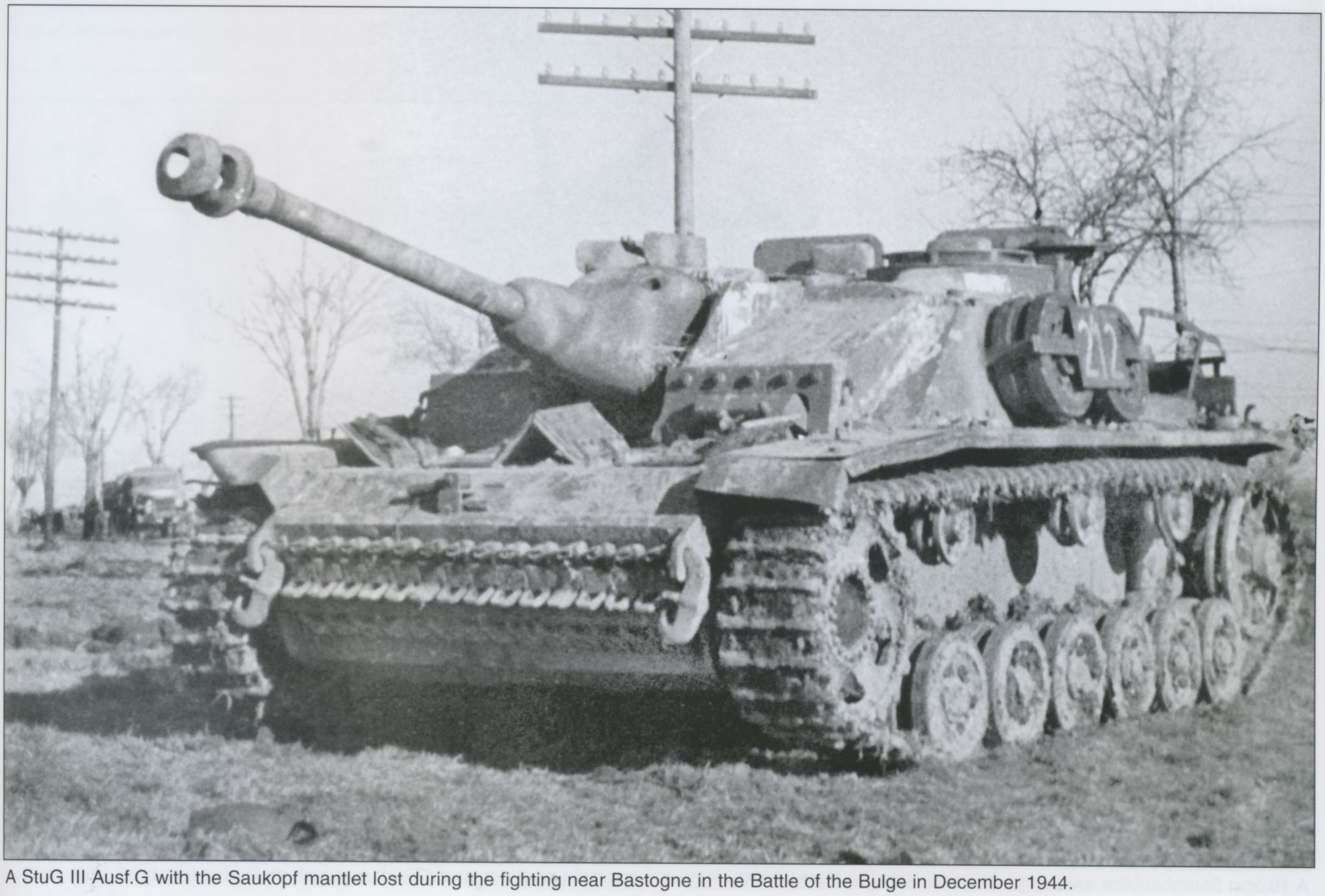
A knocked out StuG III with its crew buried alongside it, photographed by troops of the 83rd Armored Recon Battalion, 3rd Armored Division.

Officers of the 110th Infantry, 28th Division inspect a disabled StuG III in France on 28 August 1944.

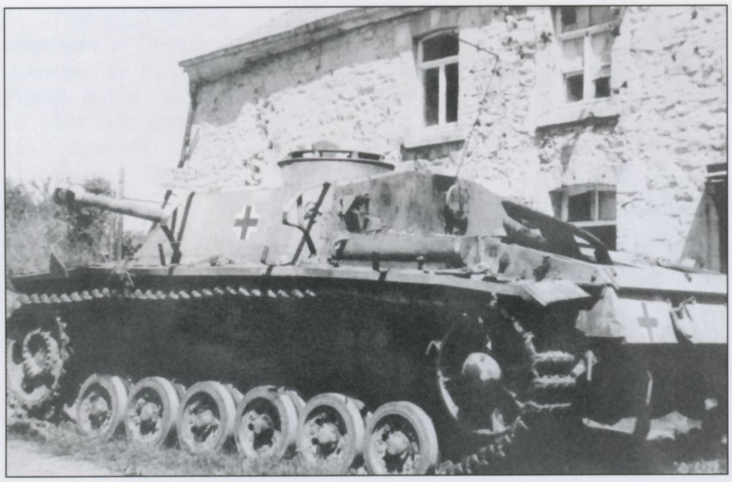




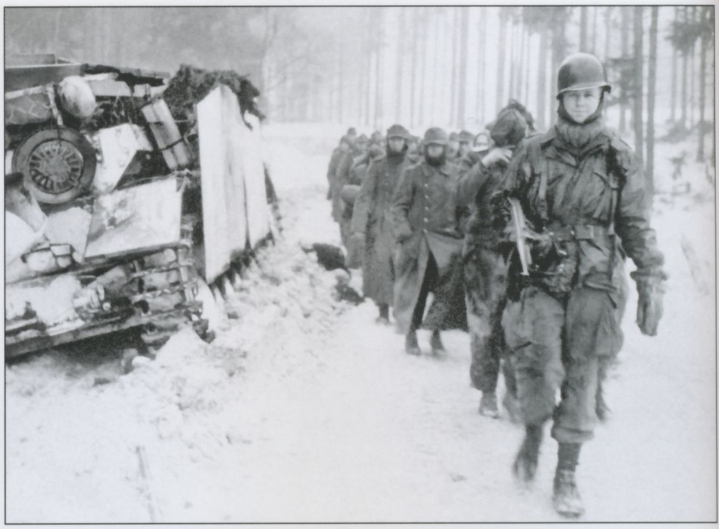
A GI inspects a StuG III In Molsheim, during the fighting in the Alsace region of France. Two of its side skirts have been removed and placed in front to provide improvised camouflage.



A StuG III Ausf.G with the Saukopf mantlet lost during the fighting near Bastogne in the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944.

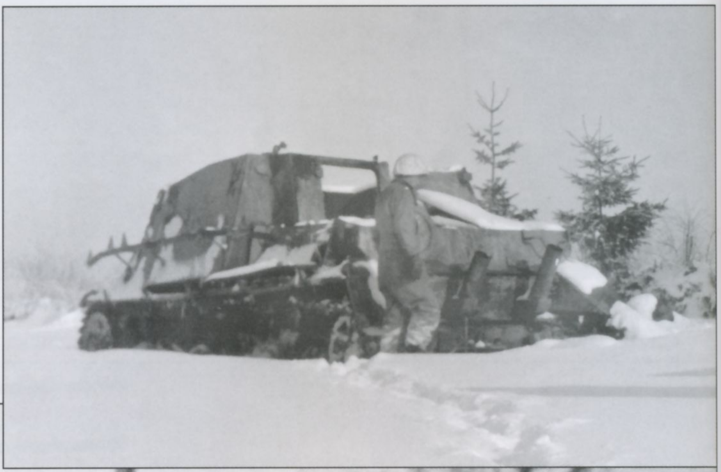


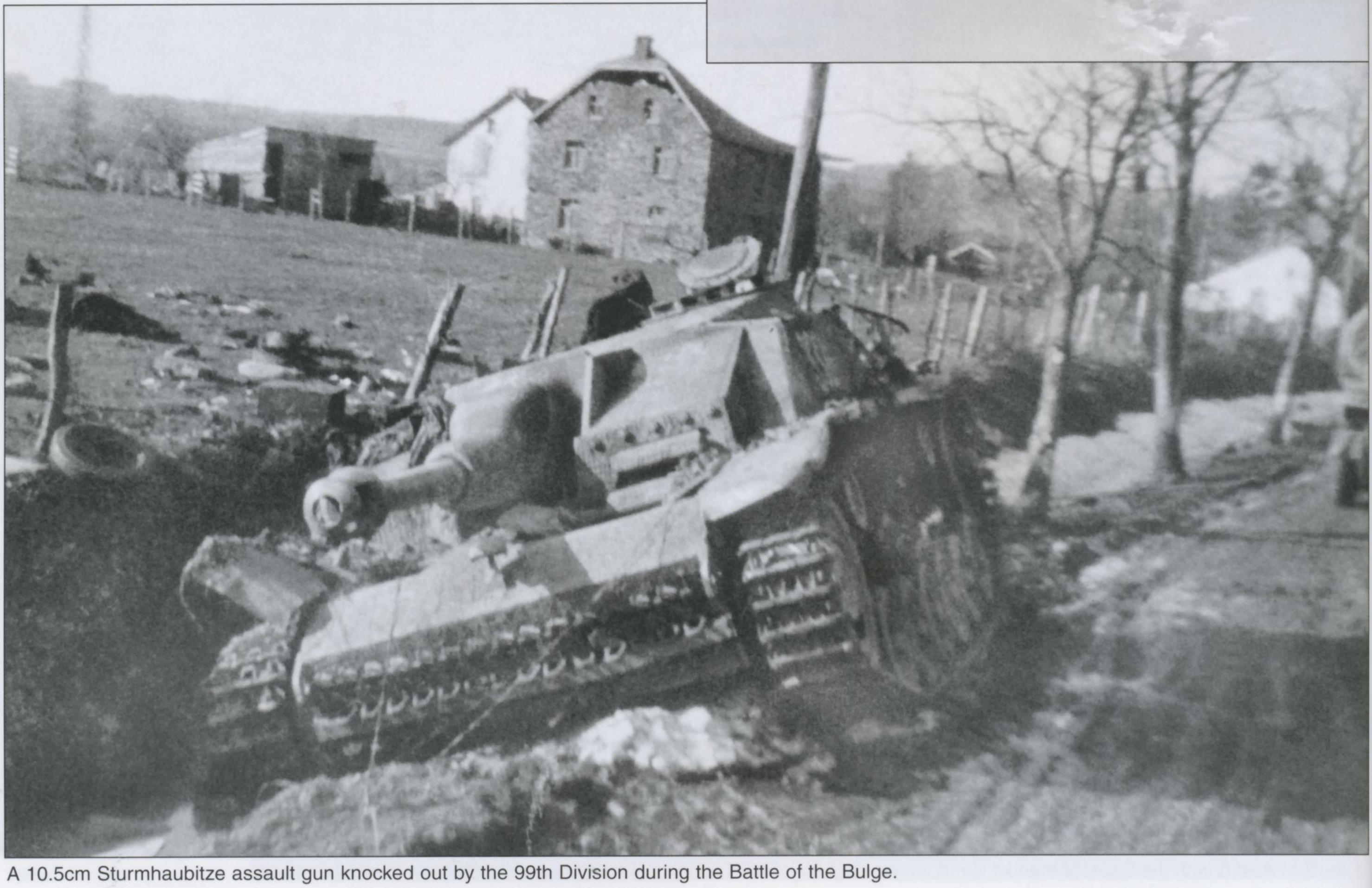
A StuG III Ausf.G abandoned near Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944.



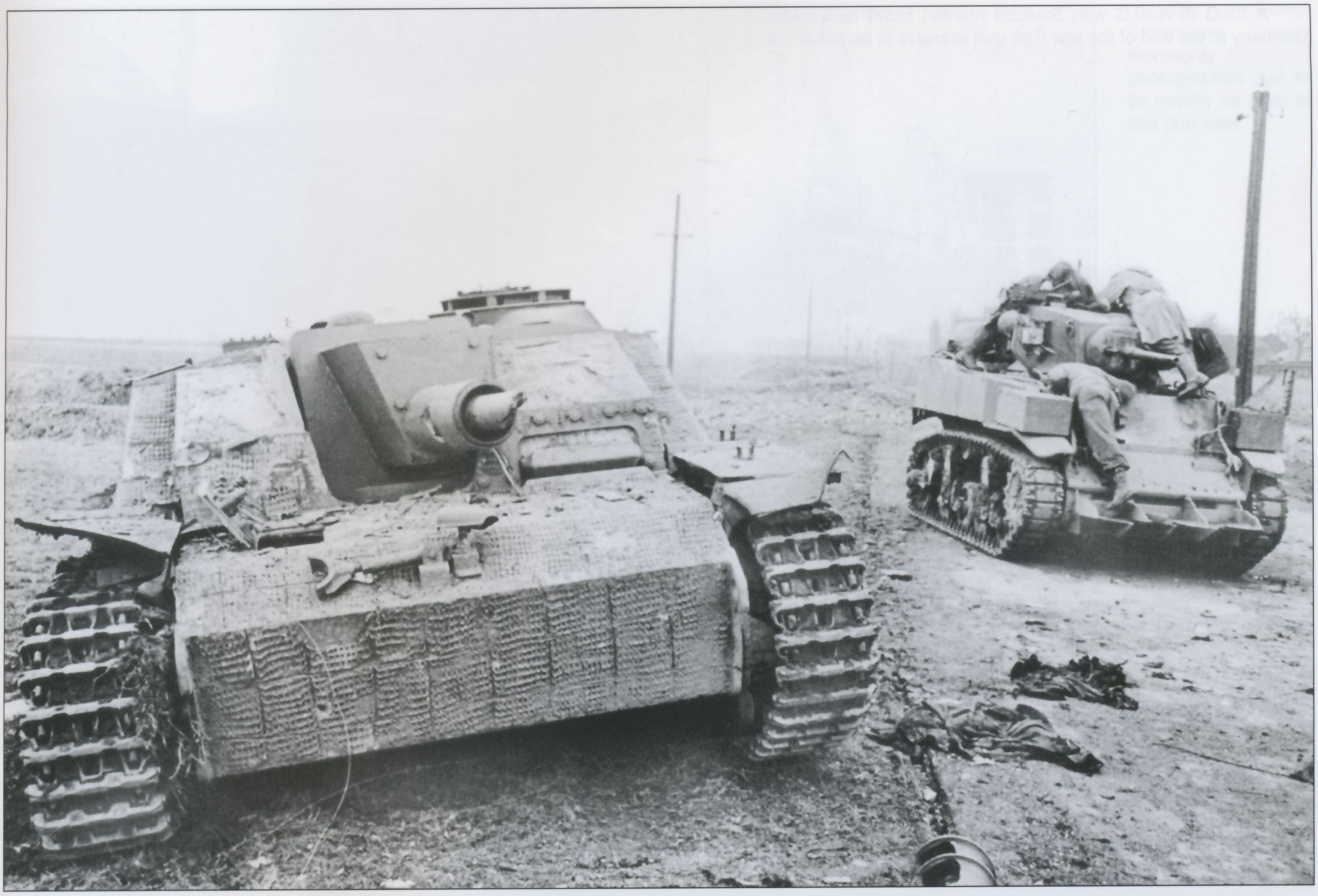
A paratrooper of the 82nd Airborne Division leads a column of German prisoners past a disabled StuG IV in the Ardennes during the Battle of the Bulge.

This Sturmpanzer IV Brummbär was photographed by the Howell mission when it visited the Ardennes following the Battle of the Bulge in January 1945.

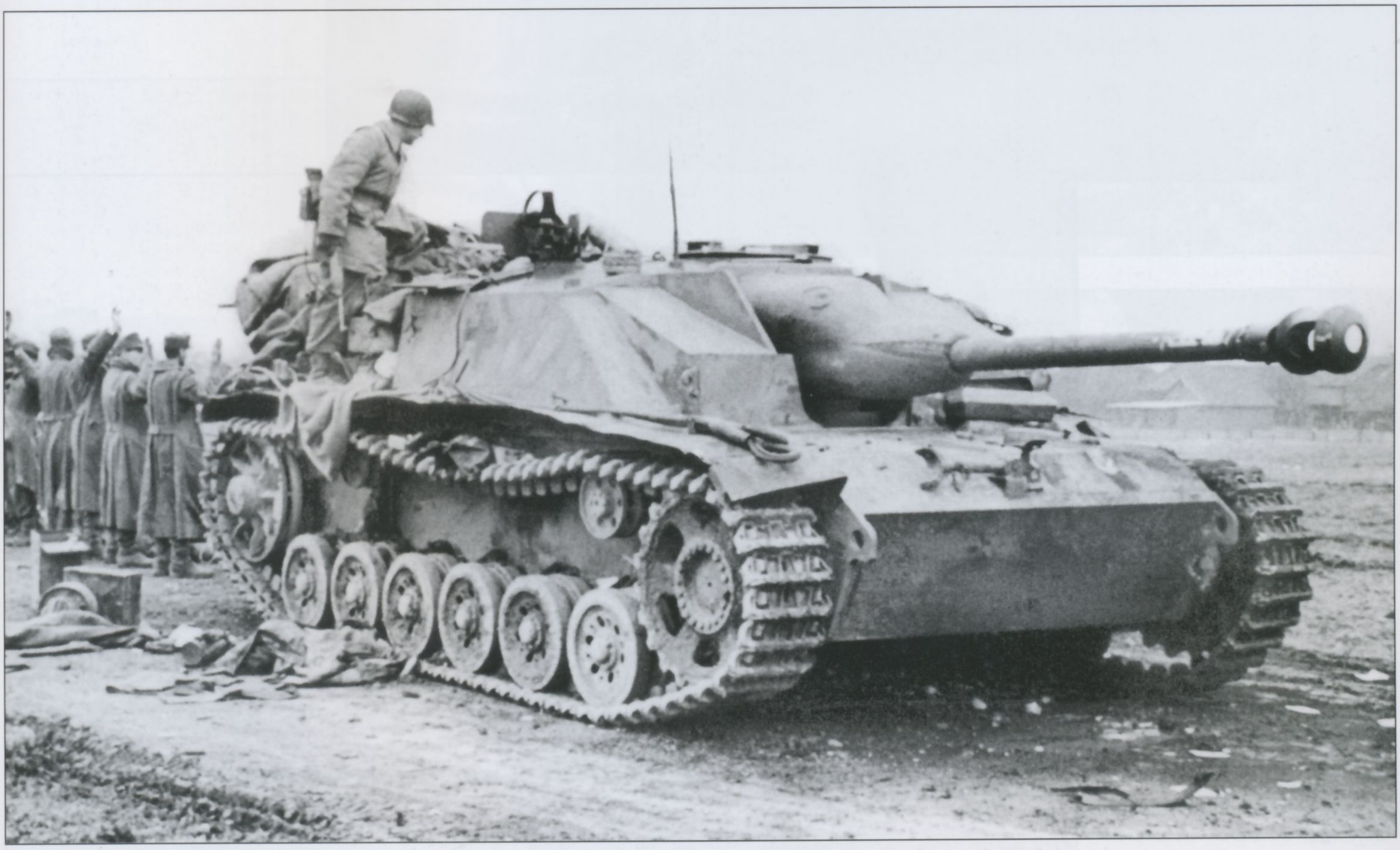




A 10.5cm Sturmhaubitze assault gun knocked out by the 99th Division during the Battle of the Bulge.

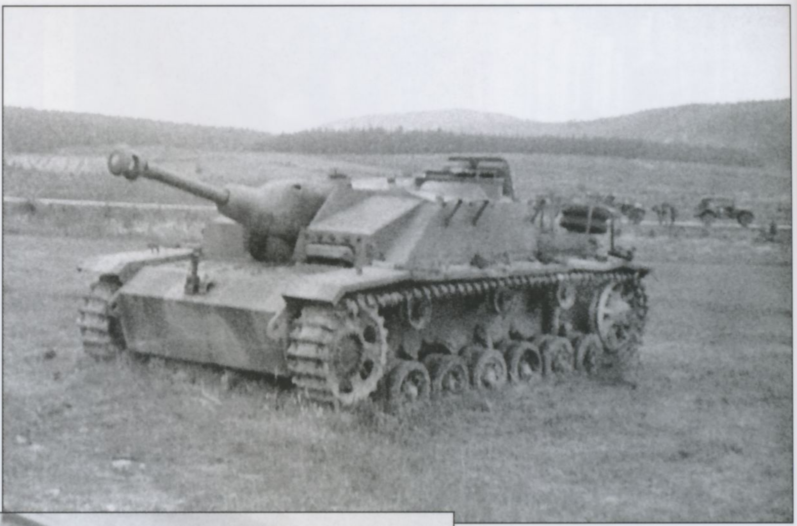


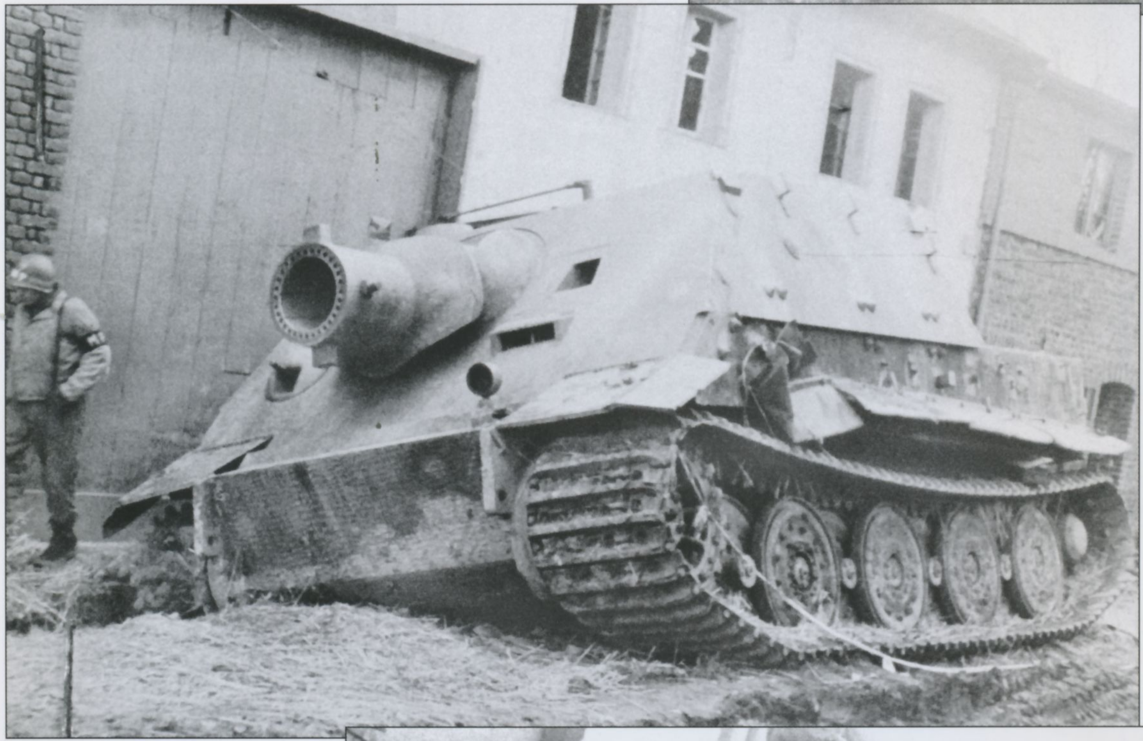
A StuG III knocked out near Rheindahlen, Germany in late February 1945 with a M5A1 light tank behind it.



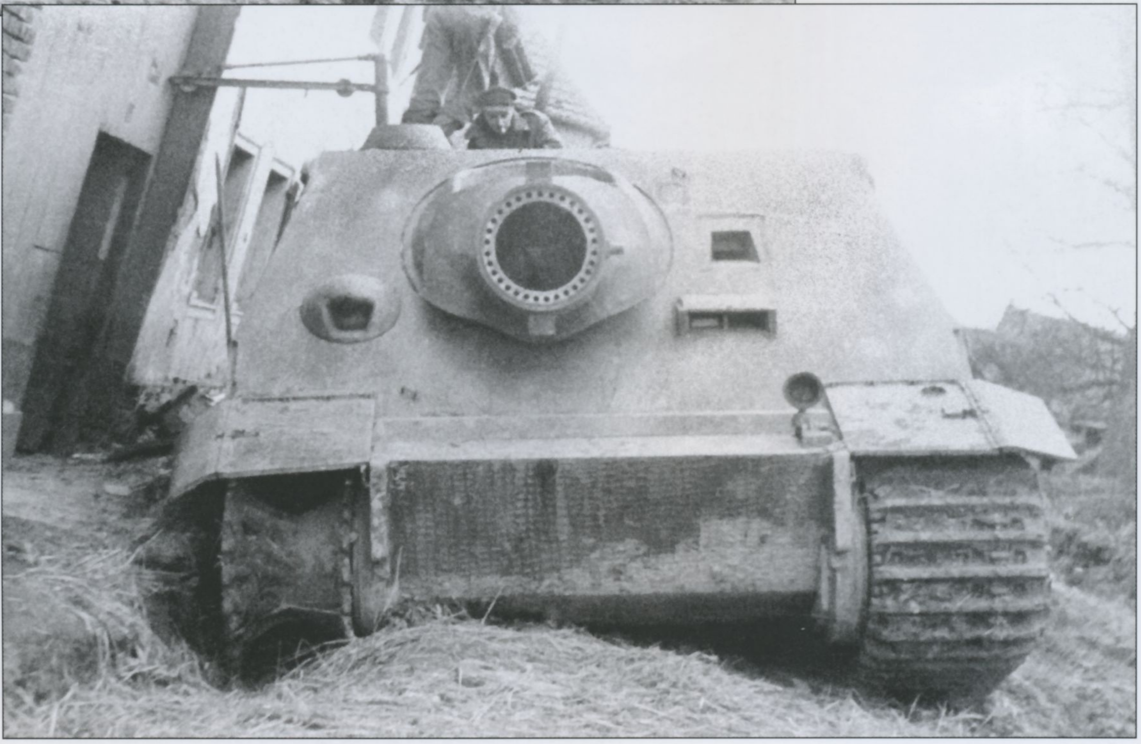
A StuG III surrendered near Rath castle on 25 February 1945 with eyes and a mouth painted on the Saukopf mantlet.

A StuG III Ausf.G with Saukopf mantlet found near Weimar, Germany at the end of the war. The gun appears to be in full recoil.

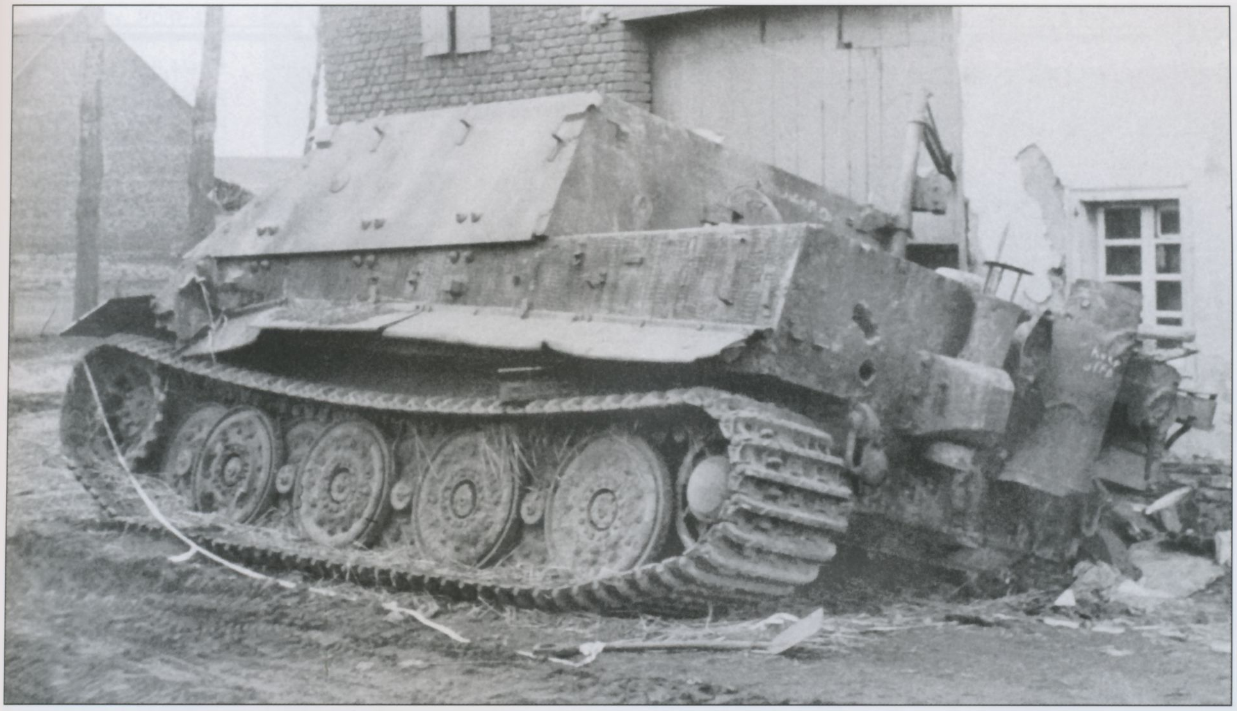


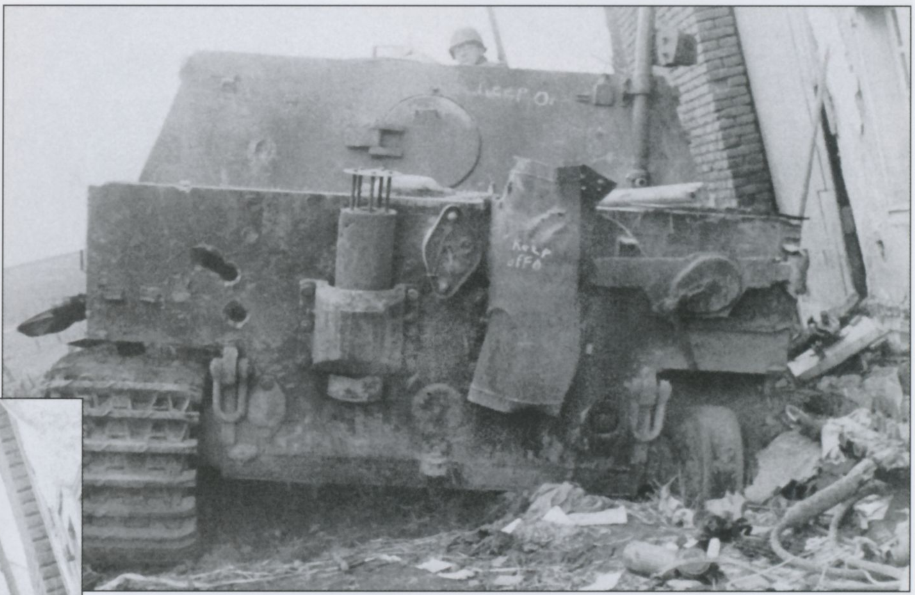


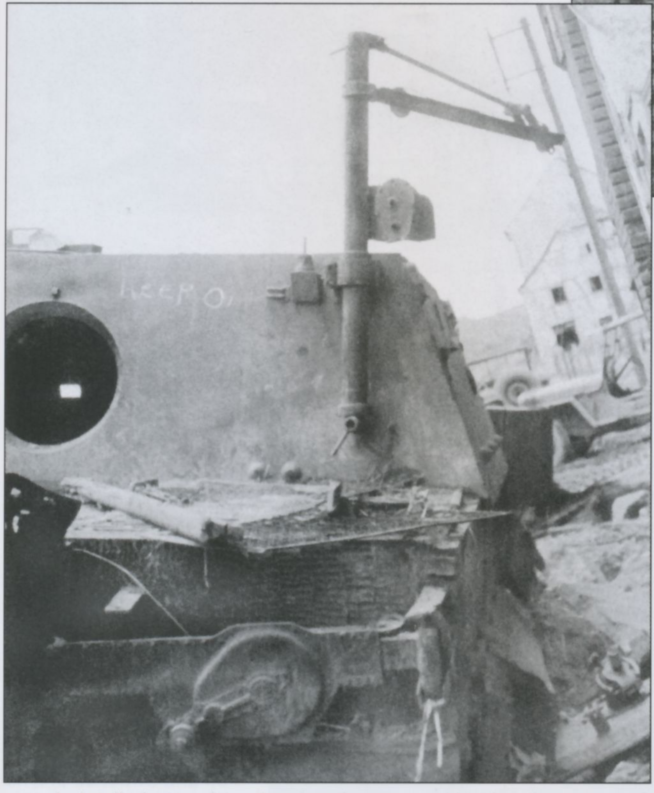
One of the more unusual armored vehicles active in the fighting in the Ruhr was the Sturmtiger serving with Kp. 1001 which went into operation near Duren in February 1945. Only a handful of vehicles were operational, and they were abandoned in early May 1945 near Bonn after they ran out of ammunition.

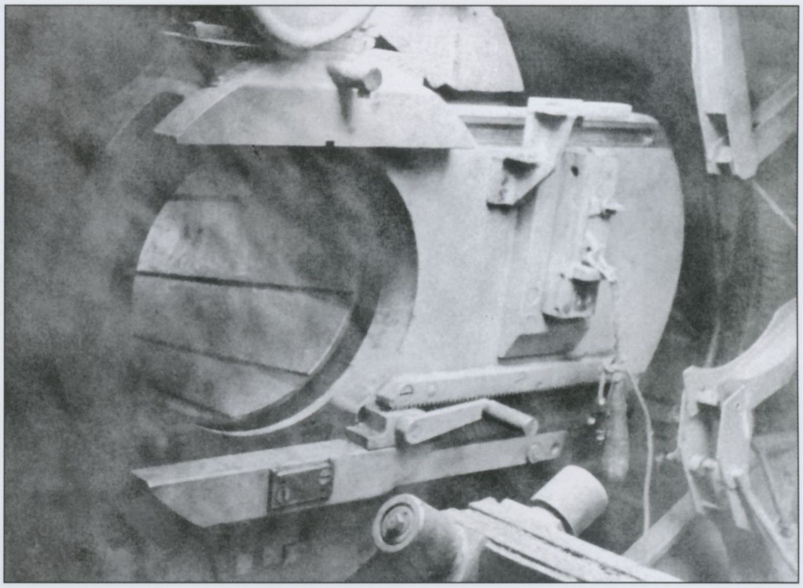


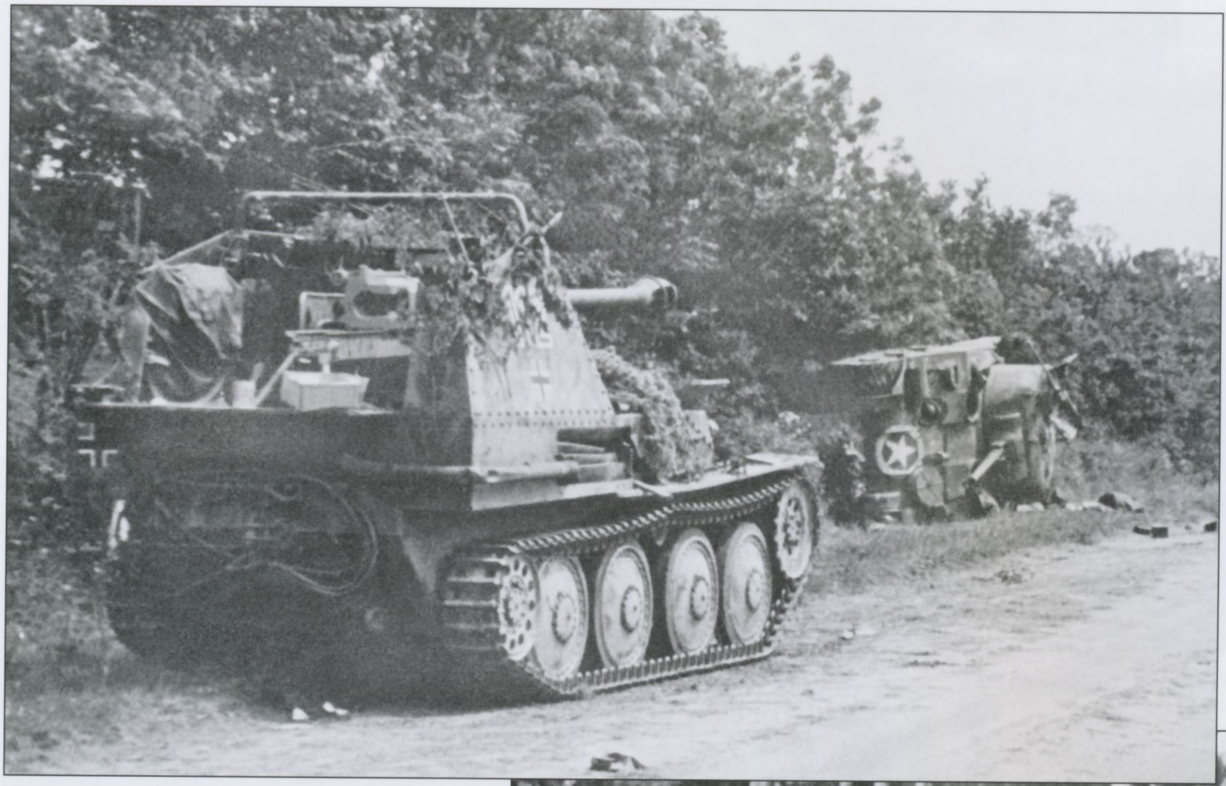
Another view of the Sturmtiger in Duren from the front.


The Duren Sturmtiger was thoroughly photographed due to its novelty as seen in this rear view.

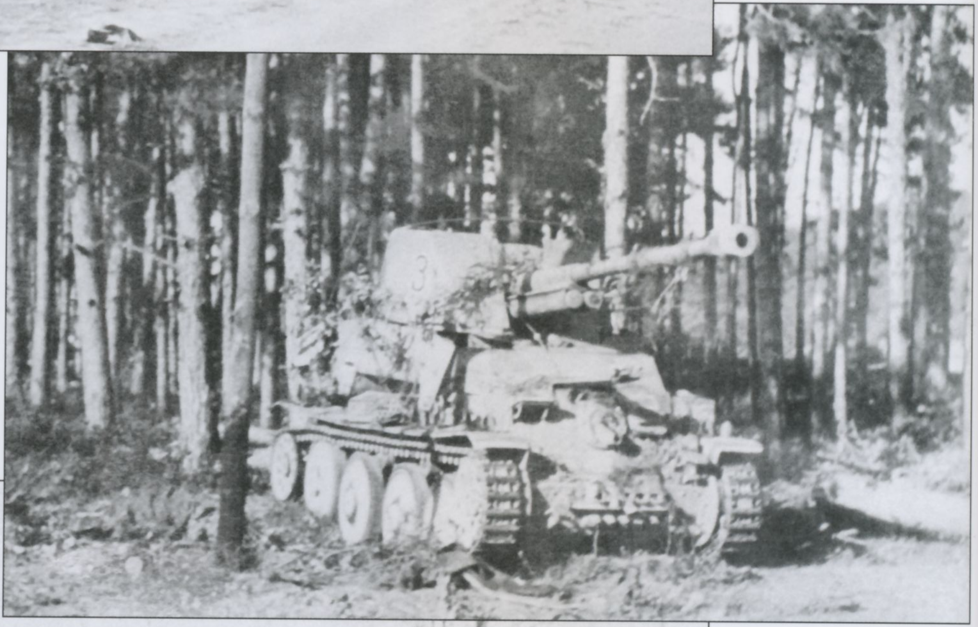

Another rear detail view of the Duren Sturmtiger.


A detailed rear view showing the ammunition loading crane of the Duren Sturmtiger.

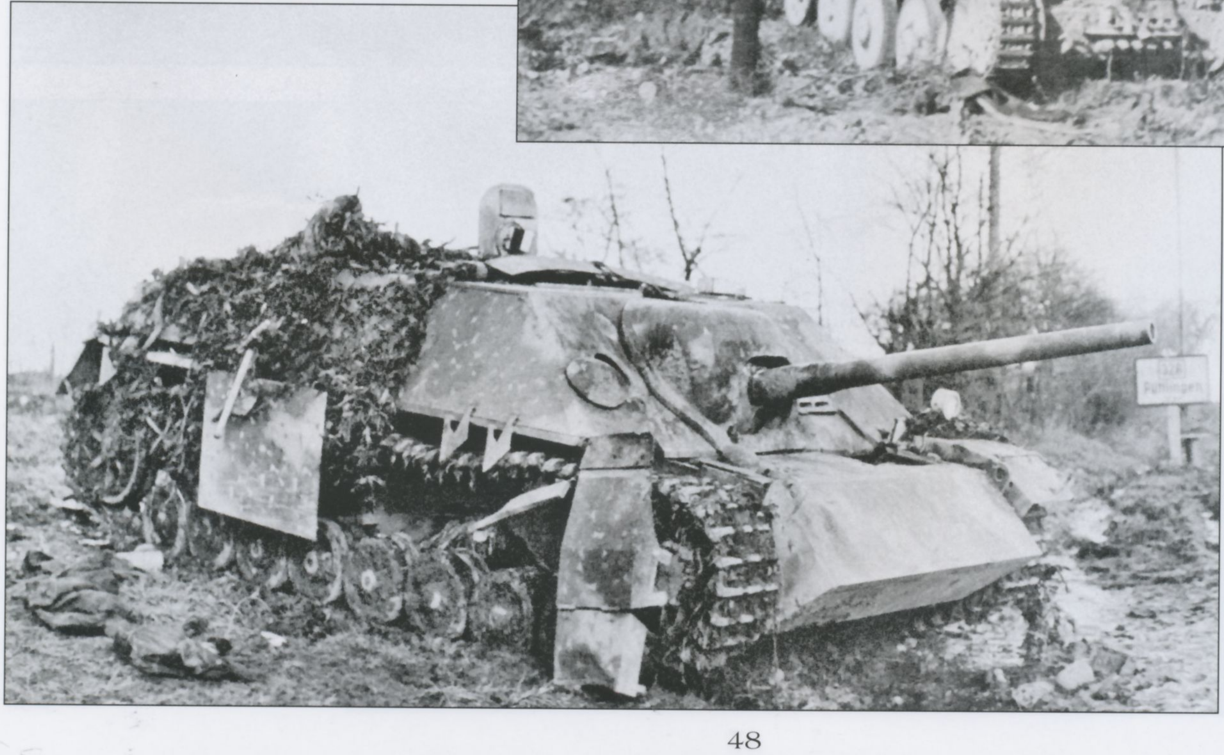

An interior of the Duren Sturmtiger showing its elaborate breech.



This Marder III Ausf.M from Pz.Jg.Abt.243 was captured by the 82nd Airborne Division during the fighting on the Cotentin peninsula in Normandy in June 1944, and a knocked out M4 medium tank can be seen in front of it.

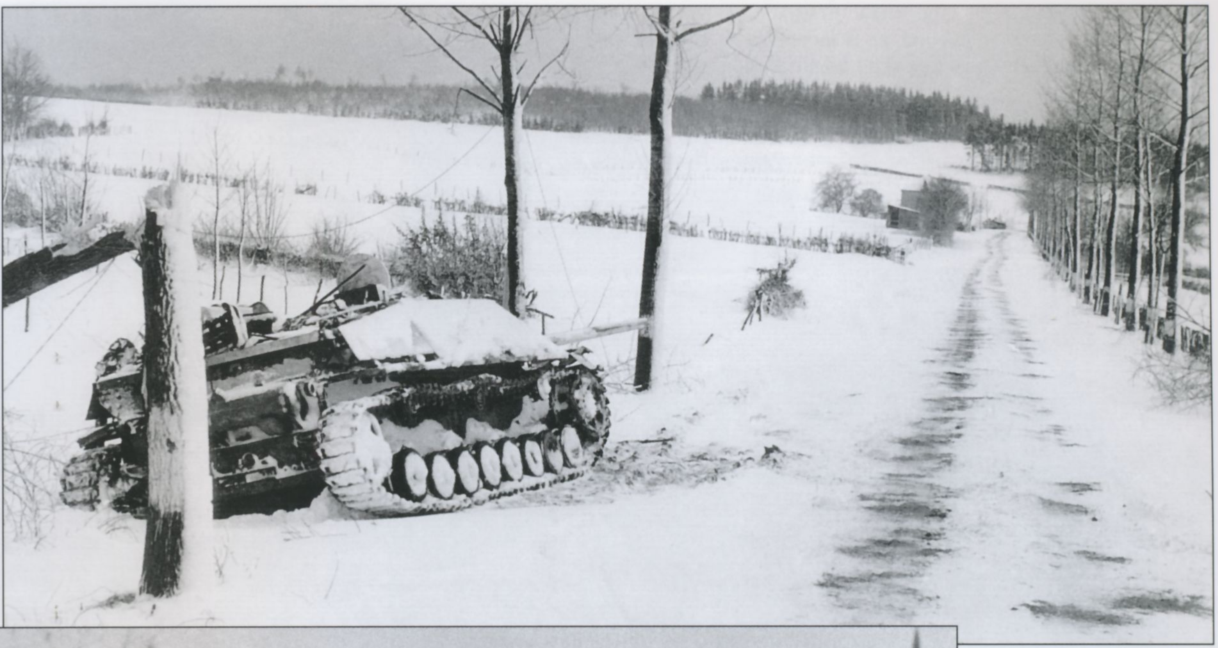


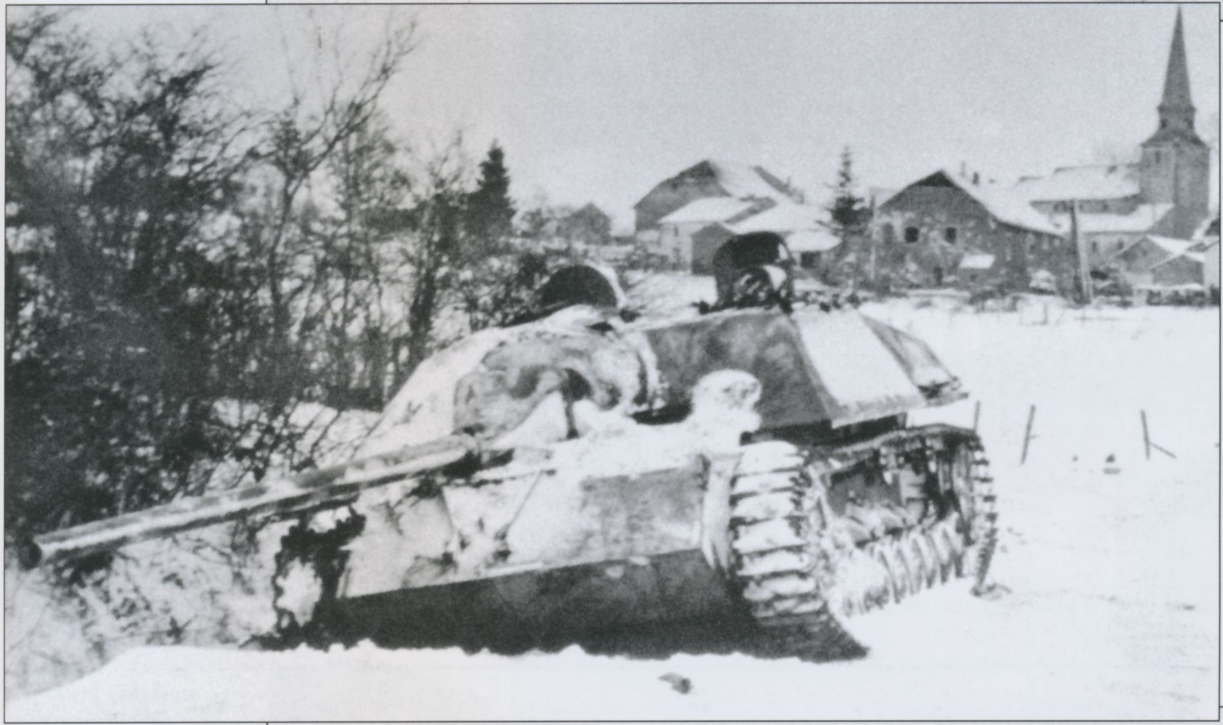
This Marder III of the 11.Panzer-Division was knocked out during the fighting with the US Seventh Army following the US Army landings on the Riviera coast on 15 August 1944.



A Jagdpanzer IV of 11.Panzer-Division knocked out by the 6th Armored Division near St. Jean Rohrbach on 25 November 1944 with the mantlet blown off and evidence of a hit on the right side of the casemate.

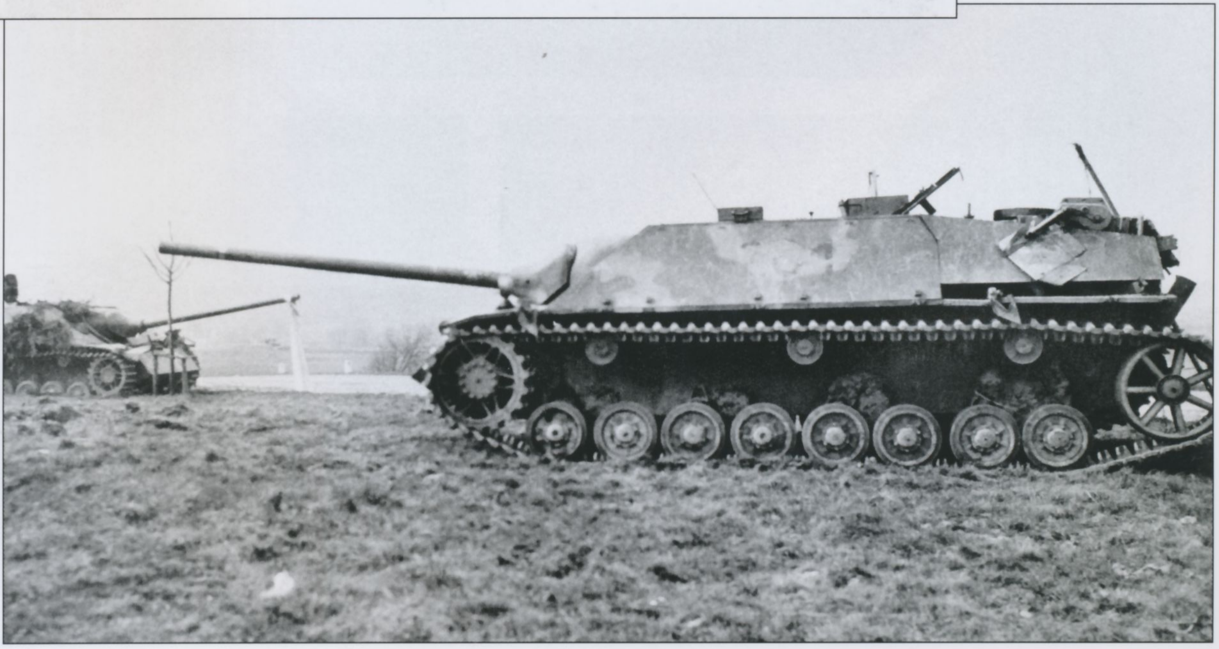
A view from the Ardennes in the aftermath of the Battle of the Bulge by a member of the Howell mission shows an abandoned Panzer IV/70, a type widely seen in the Ardennes campaign.



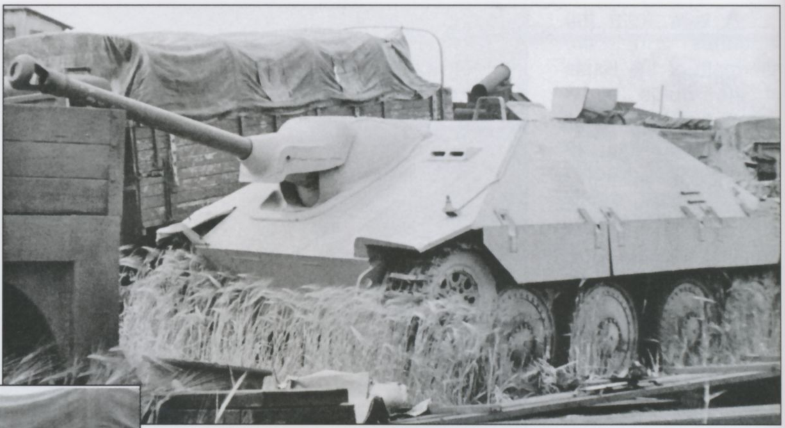


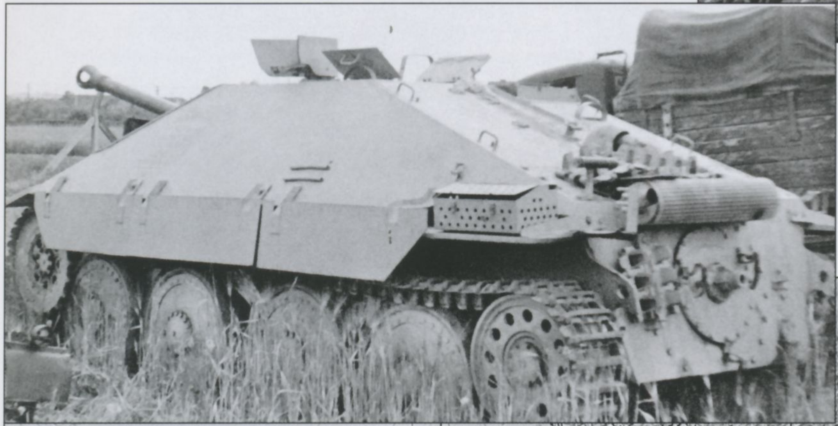
A snow covered Panzer IV/70 photographed in the Ardennes after the Battle of the Bulge by a US Army team.

A pair of Panzer IV/70 captured by the US First Army near Oberpleis, Germany on 25 March 1945, with hull number “201”.

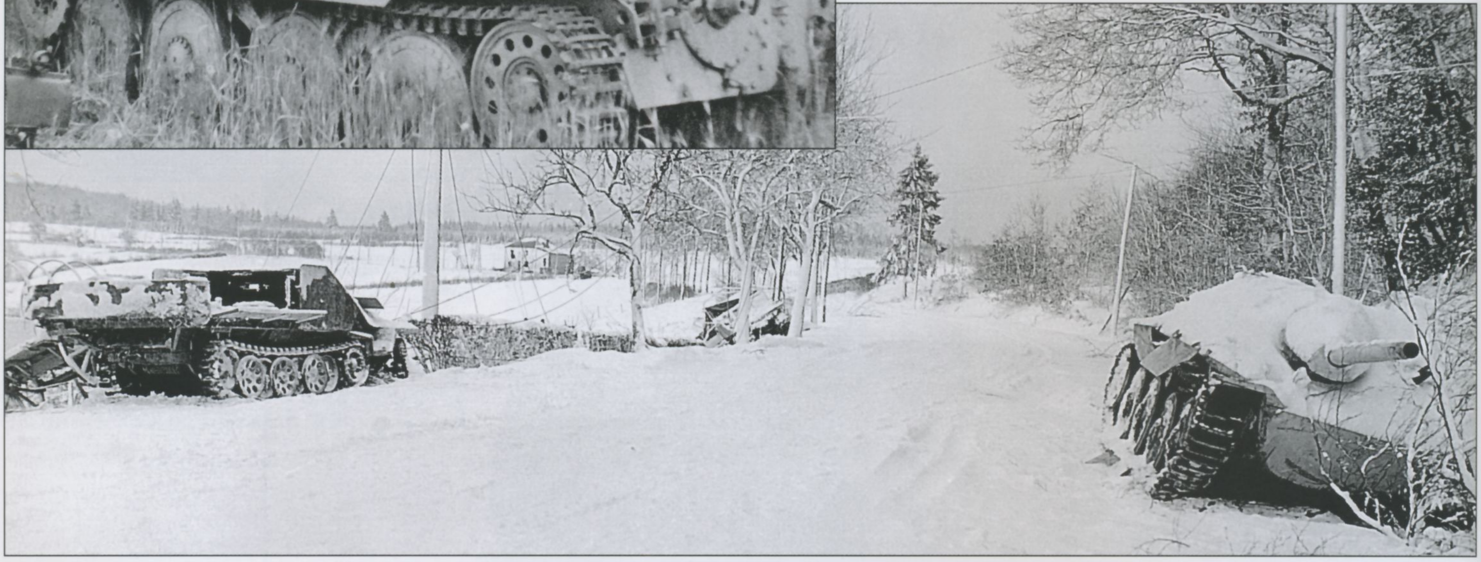


This early production Jagdpanzer 38 was found by US troops at the Rheinmetall proving ground at Hillersleben. It is fitted with a muzzle brake which was seldom seen on production vehicles.

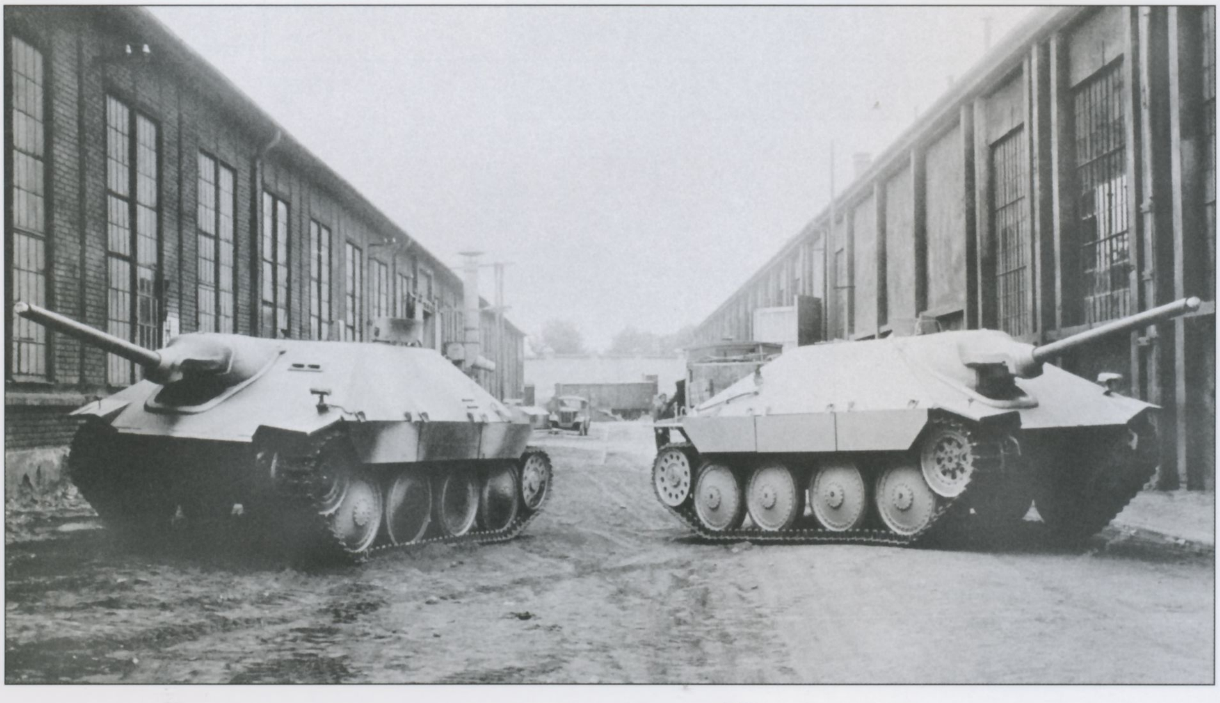




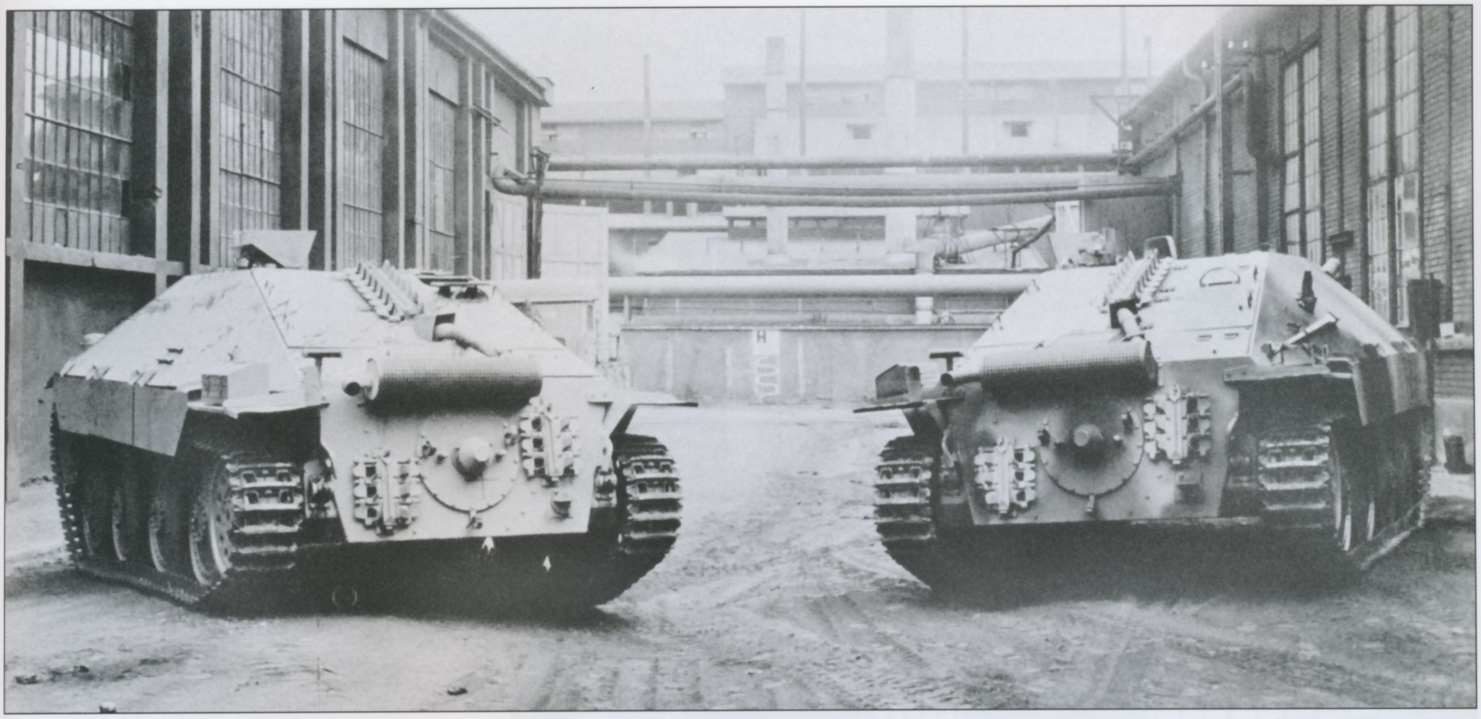
Another view of the Hillersleben Hetzer from the rear showing early production features.



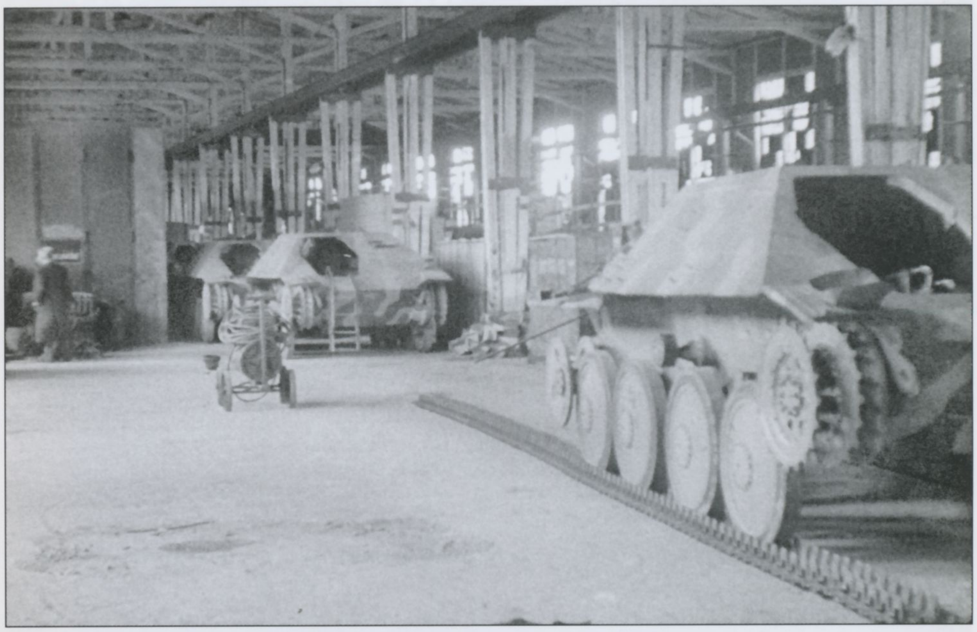
Another photo in the Ardennes by the Howell mission shows an abandoned Jagdpanzer 38 to the right and an early production Sd.Kfz.251/17 2cm FlaK half-track.



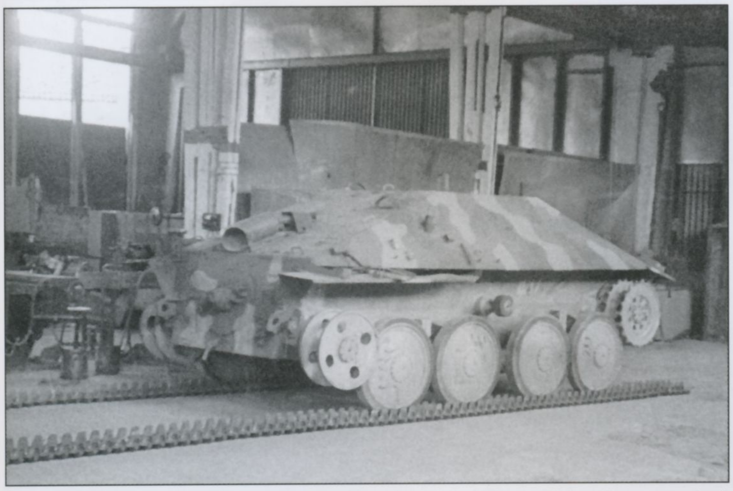
US technical intelligence units occasionally found German photos at plants which ended up in US reports. This photo shows a pair of early production Jagdpanzer 38s presumably inside the BMM production facility with the characteristic early production mantlet.



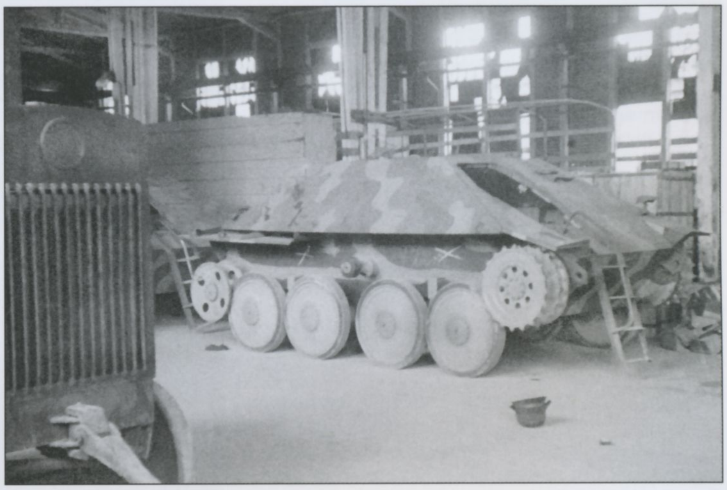
The second photo of this series shows the same pair of Jagdpanzer 38s from the rear. The vehicle on the left appears to be in a monotone finish, probably dark yellow.



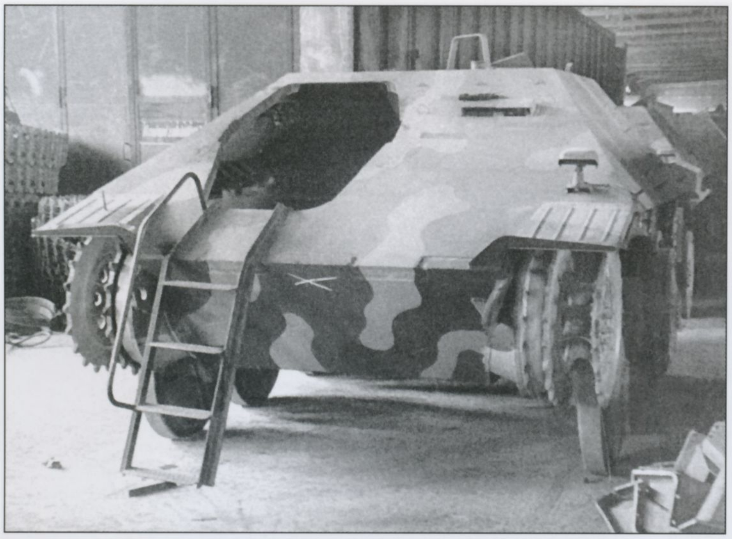
A US ordnance team visited the Skoda plant in Plzen after the war where they inspected the assembly line. This shows a group of incomplete Jagdpanzer 38 tank destroyers inside the factory.



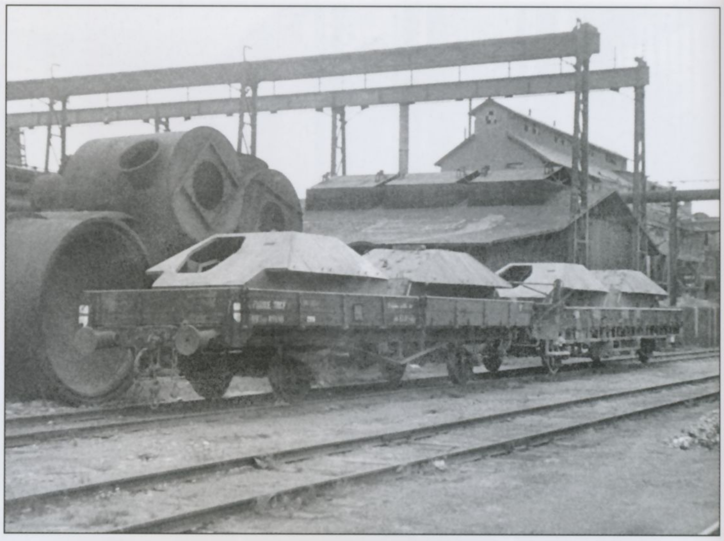
Another view inside the Skoda assembly plant. This shows typical details of the late production vehicles such as the idler wheel with four holes.



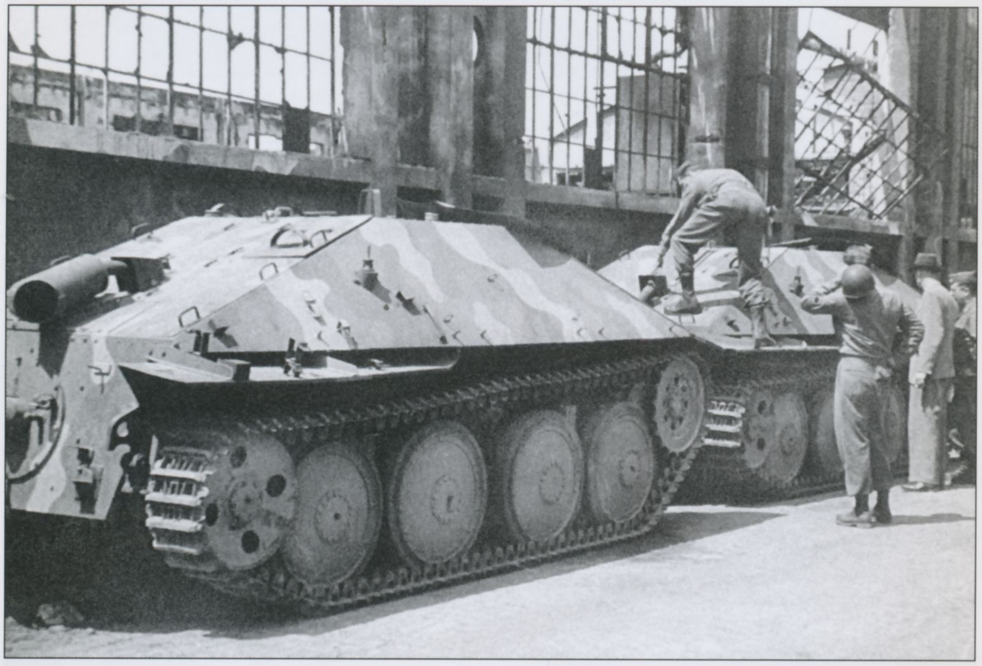
This view from the Hetzer assembly hall provides an interesting glimpse of the camouflage pattern on the lower hull.



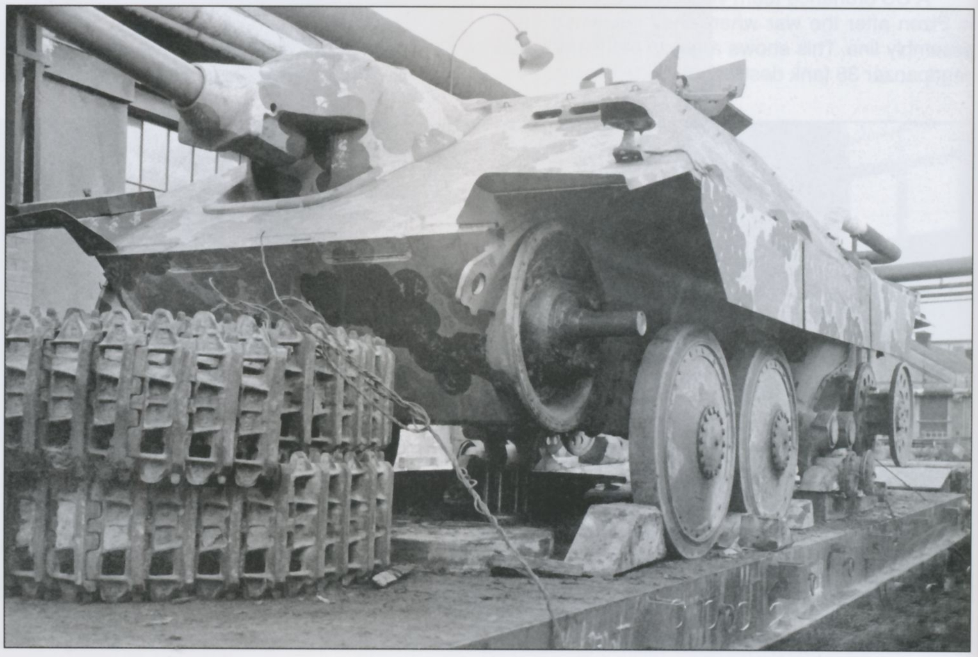
Another view from the Skoda assembly hall. One of the more curious features of the late production Skoda Jagdpanzer 38s was the painting of black rectangles near the view slits, presumably to create false targets.



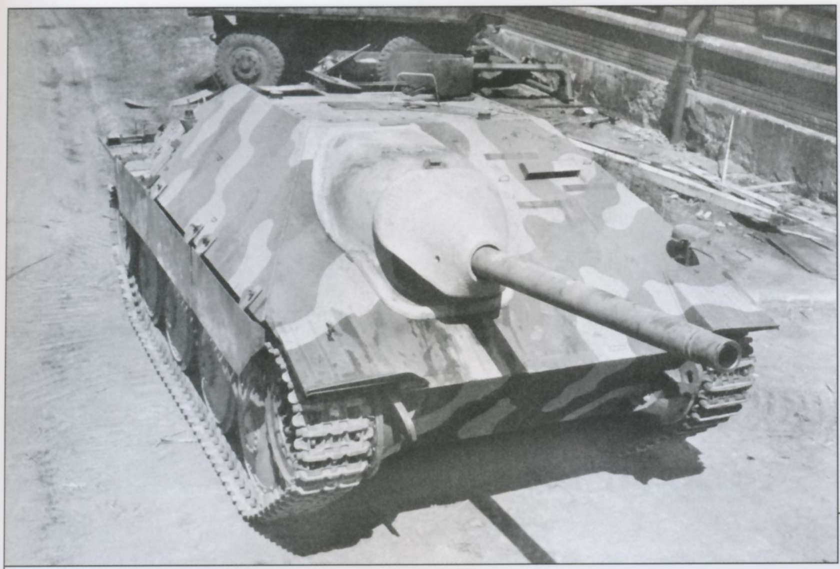
A trainload of uncompleted Hetzer hulls wait outside the main assembly hall for completion. Note that camouflage has not yet been applied.



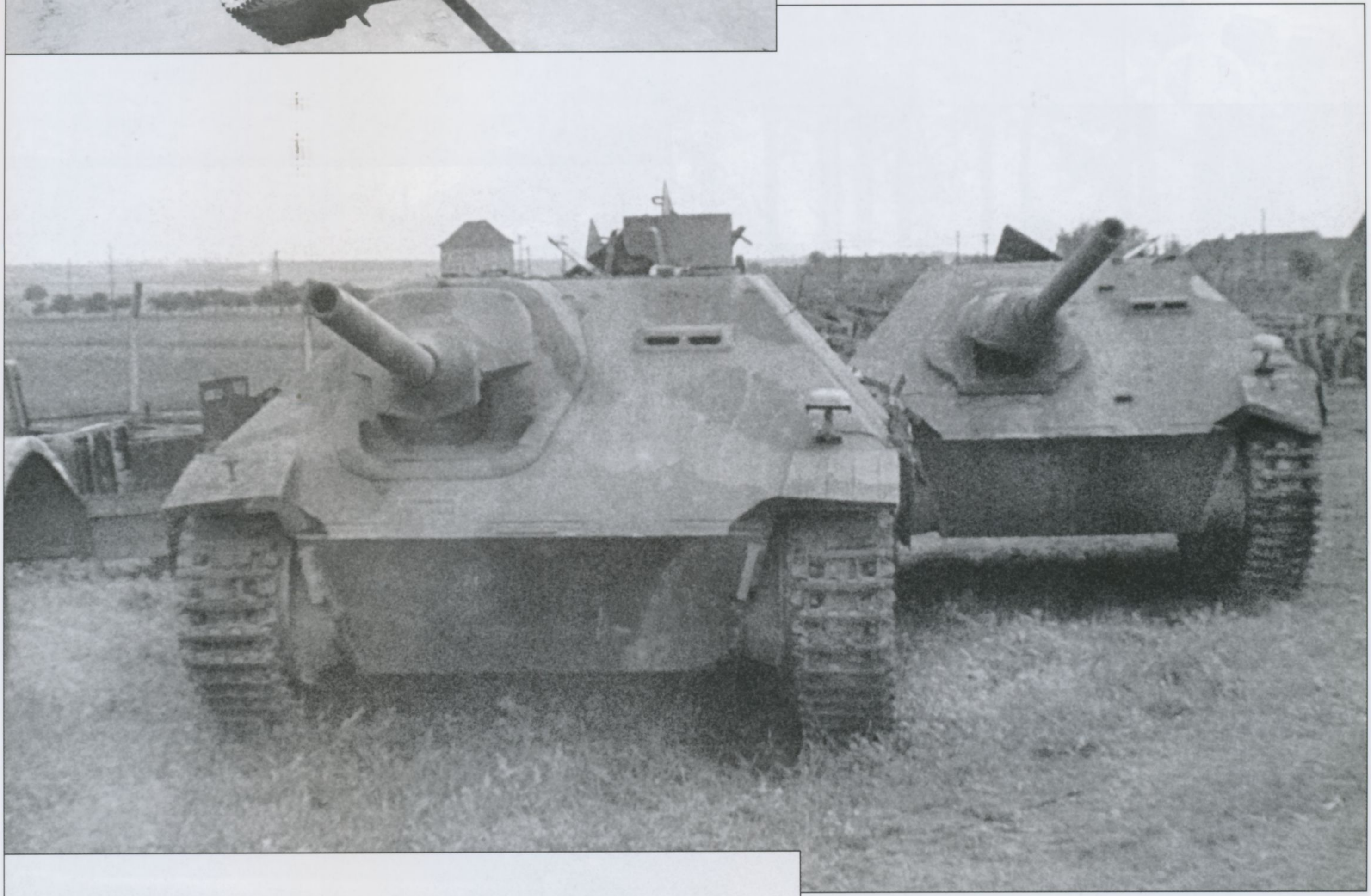
The US Army ordnance team inspects some Hetzers outside the plant in the final Skoda pattern camouflage.



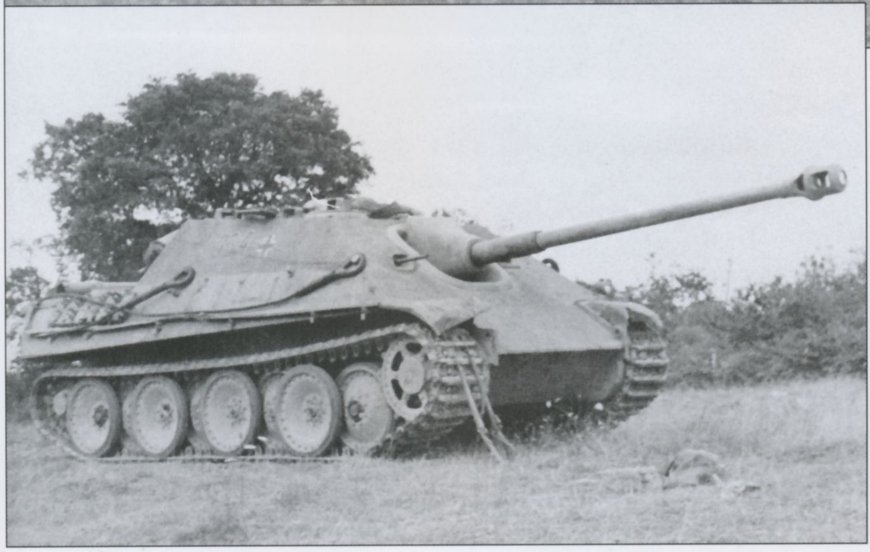
This Jagdpanzer 38 was also found at the Skoda plant but is from the initial summer 1944 production batches with the typical Skoda pattern ambush camouflage.



A completed Jagdpanzer 38 outside the Skoda hall after completion. The mantlet is in a single color as it had been added after the hull camouflage had been applied.

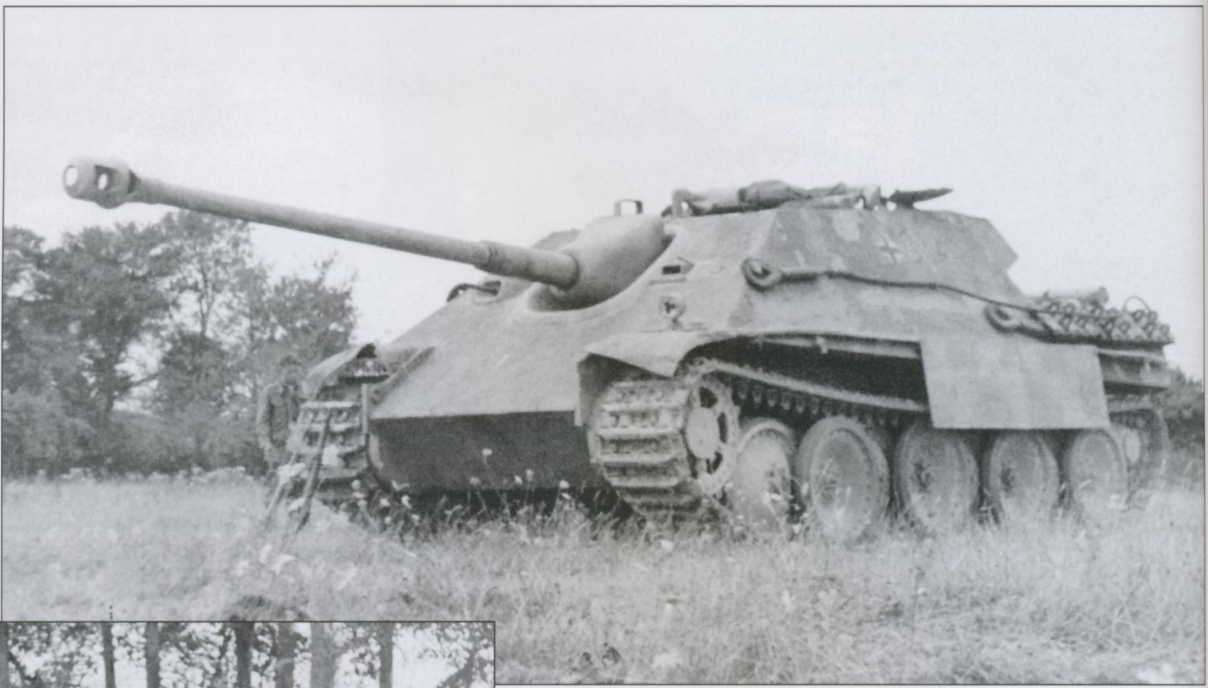


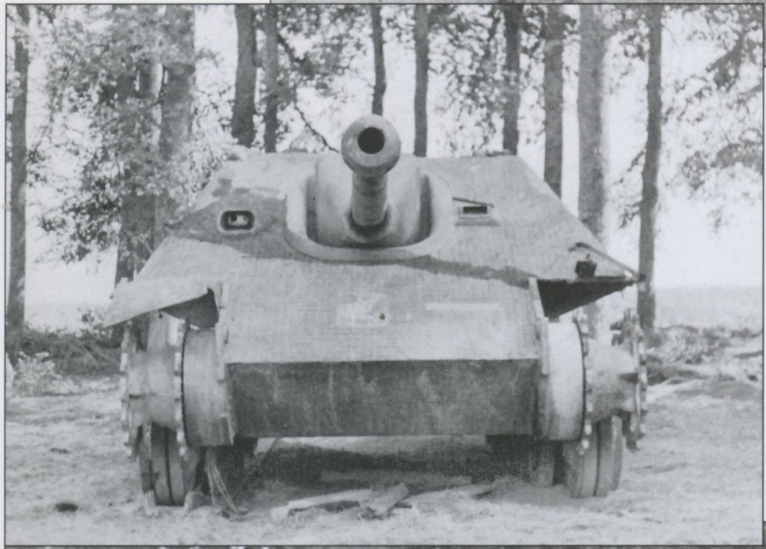
This pair of Jagdpanzer 38 were found at the Rheinmetall proving ground at Hillersleben and the vehicle to the right is one of the rare Jagdpanzer 38 Starr with its unique mantlet. This photo is doubly rare, as few Starr vehicles ever left Czech territory.



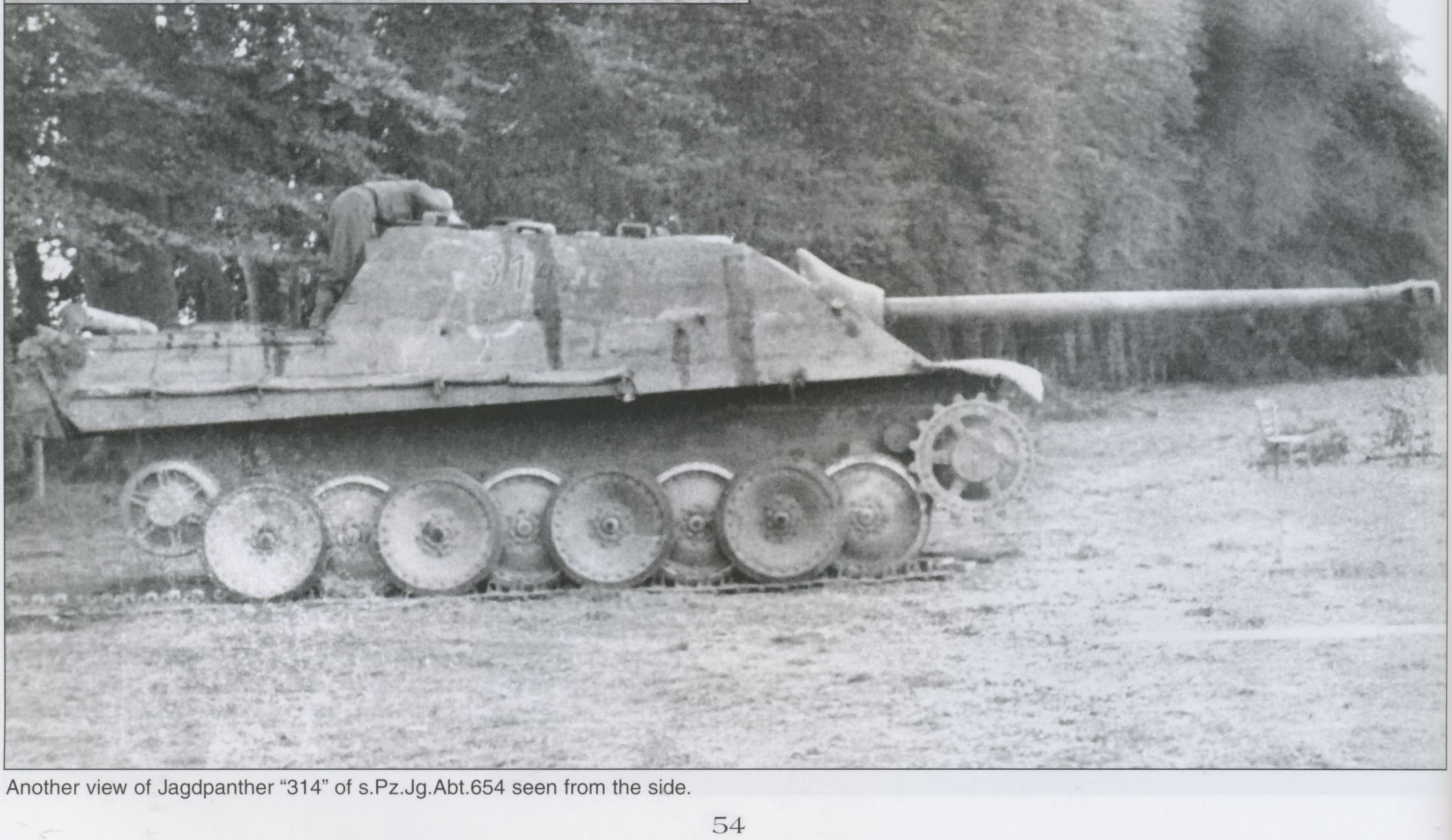
The Jagdpanther was first encountered in Normandy, serving with a company from s.Pz.Jg.Abt.654. As a result, when the first few were captured, they were the source of considerable interest by US Army technical intelligence. This photo was taken by a technical intelligence team of the US First Army.

A view of the other side of the s.Pz.Jg.Abt.654 Jagdpanther "334" from the left side. This is from the mid-production run with the two-piece barrel.

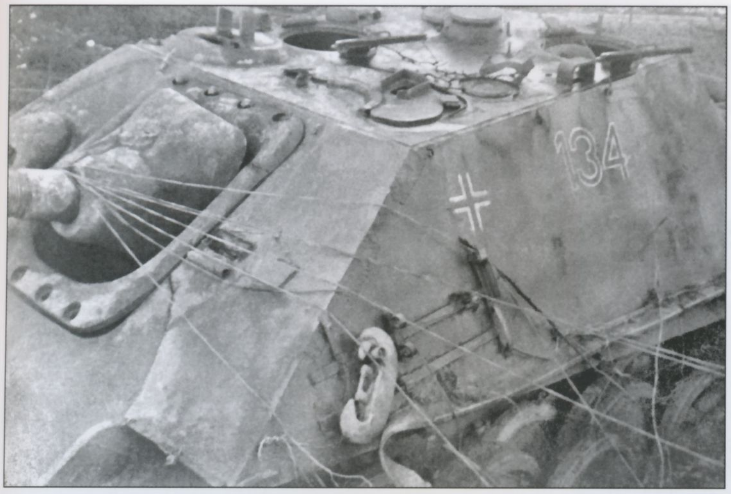




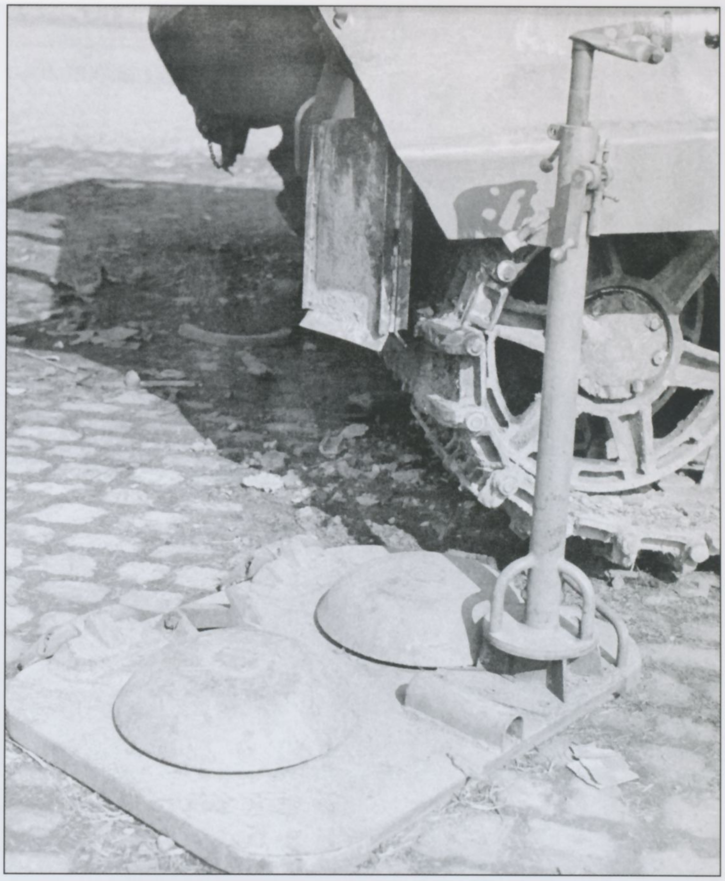
Another Jagdpanther of s.Pz.Jg.Abt.654 was also captured, numbered "314", from the earlier production batch with the one-piece barrel. The griffon painted on the bow was added by British troops.



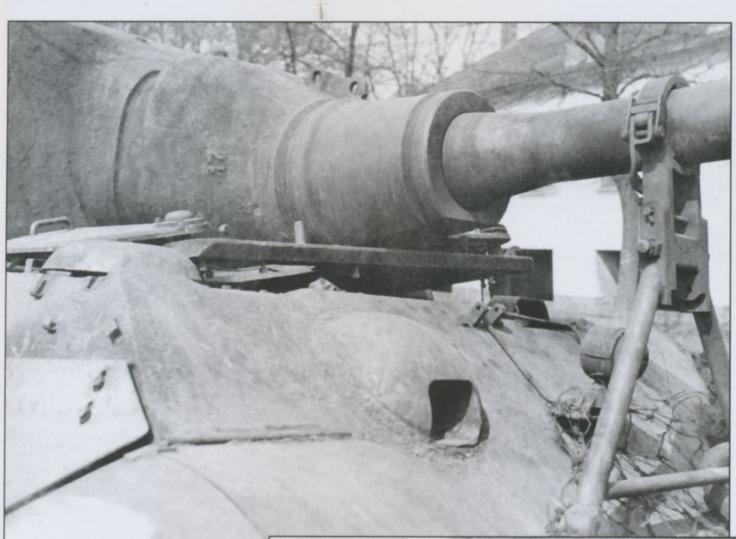
Another view of Jagdpanther "314" of s.Pz.Jg.Abt.654 seen from the side.



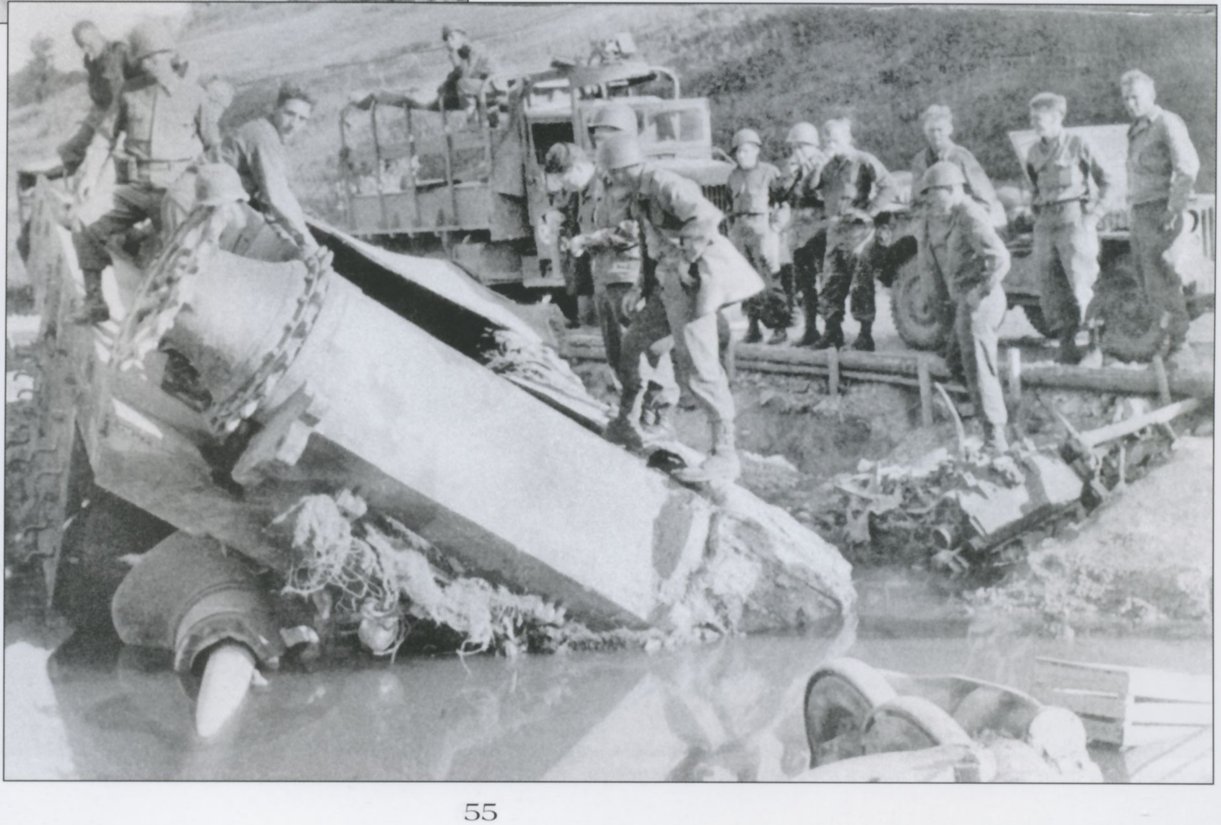
The Jagdpanther was not often encountered by US forces until the Ardennes fighting. This Jagdpanther, number "134", belonged to s.Pz.Jg.Abt.560 which was knocked out while supporting the 12.SS-Panzer-Division in the costly fighting against the US 26th Infantry Regt. for Dom Butgenbach manor farm in the opening phase of the Battle of the Bulge. This is from the later production batches with the bolted mantlet.



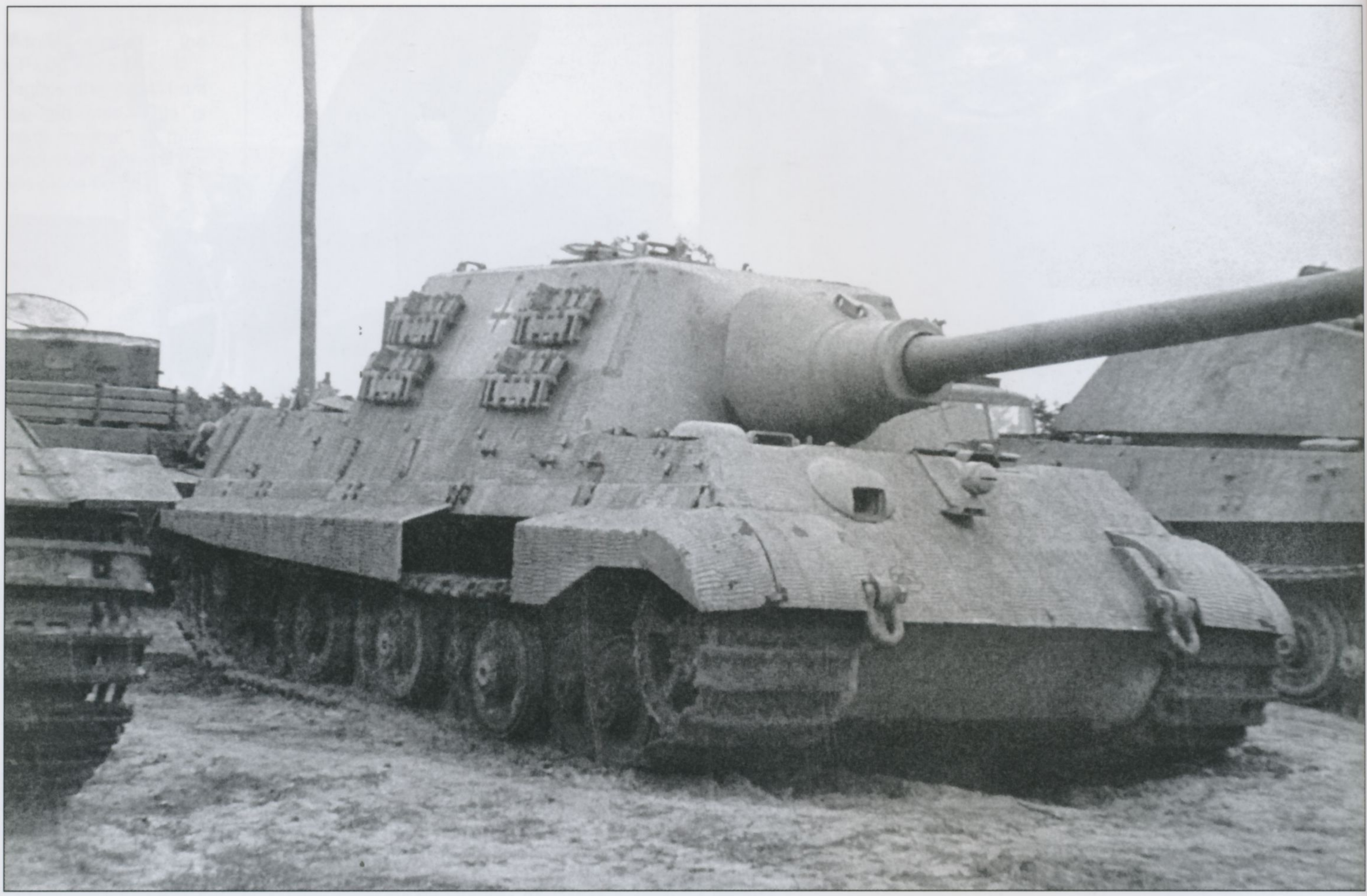
Technical intelligence teams inspecting one of the Jagdtigers of s.Pz.Jg.Abt.512 near Paderborn in April 1945 took some detail shots of its features. This is the rear engine deck hatch and shows the pintle mounting for a rear MG-42 anti-aircraft machine gun.



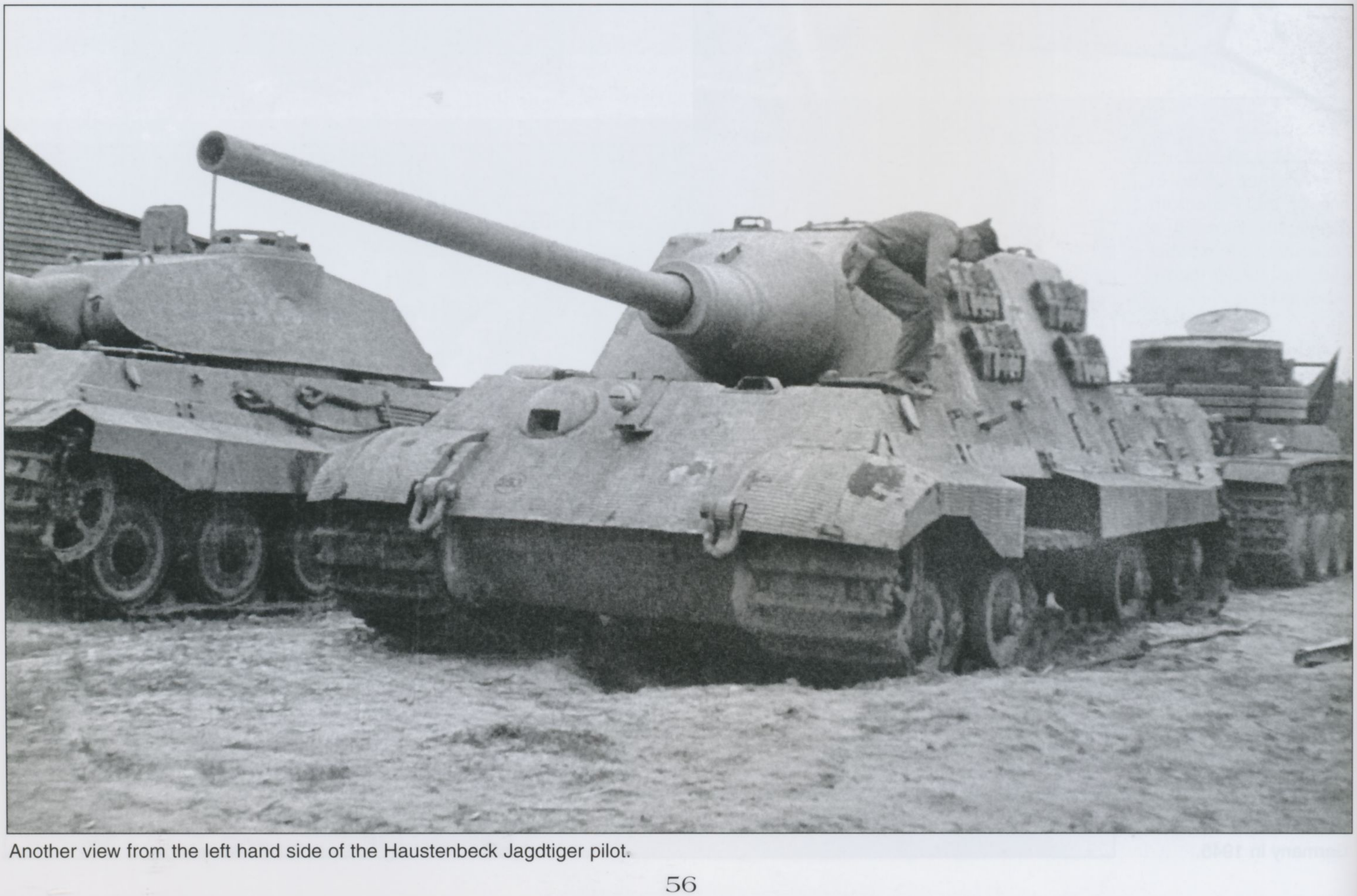
Another view of one of the Paderborn Jagdtigers showing a close-up of the mantlet and the heavy barrel travel lock.



Ooops! GIs inspect a Jagdtiger pushed off the side of a road and now trapped in mud and water somewhere in Germany in 1945.

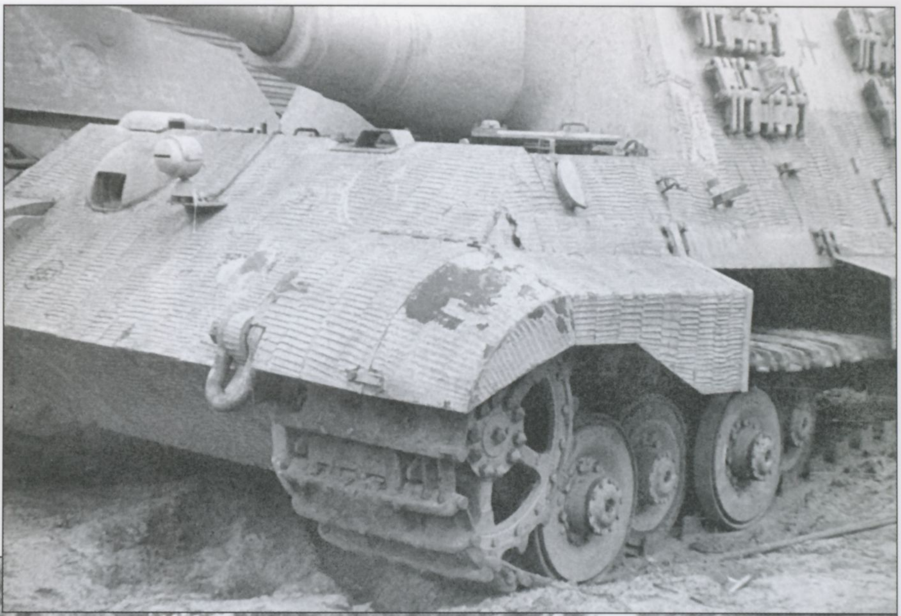


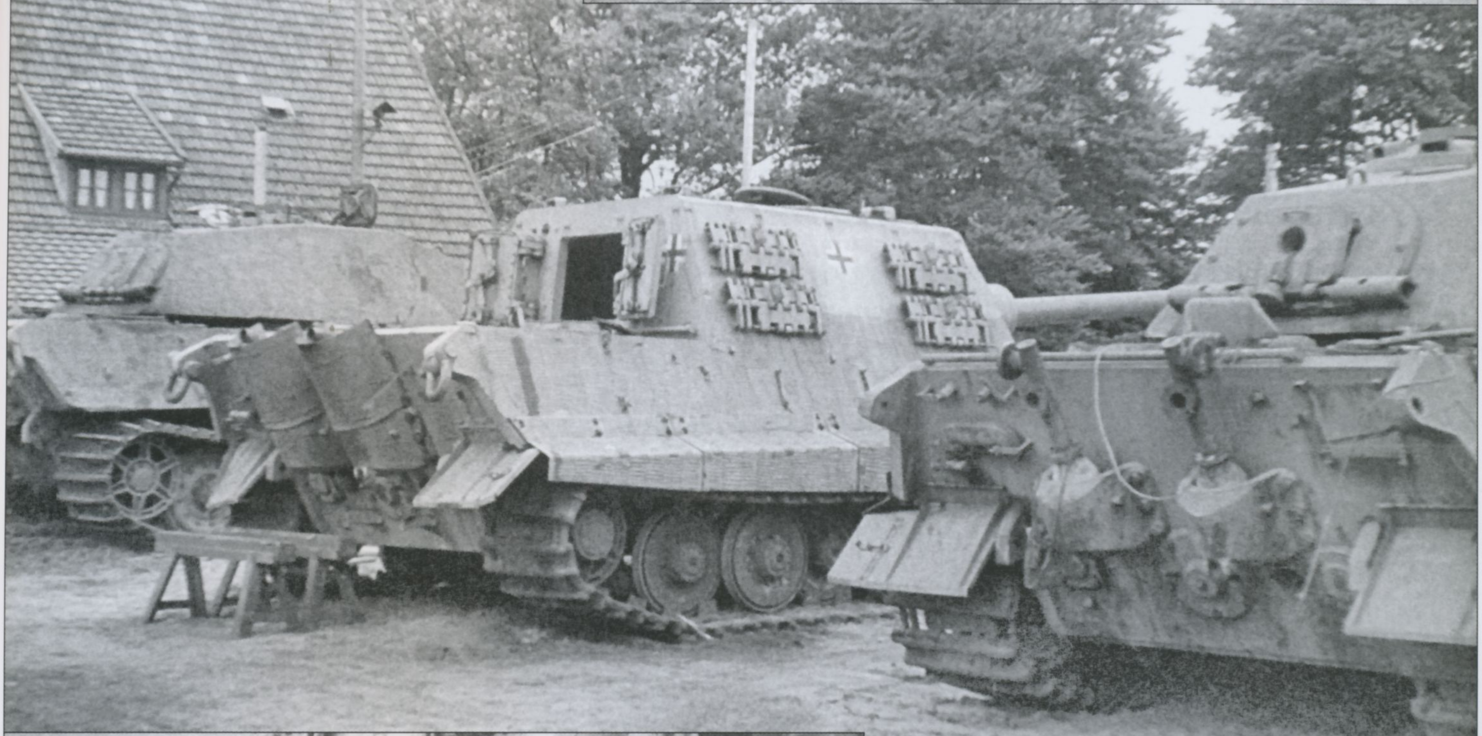
A US technical intelligence team after the fighting photographed this pilot Jagdtiger at the Henschel proving ground at Haustenbeck near the Henschel and Wegman plants in Kassel. It is one of the two initial vehicles built with the Porsche suspension.



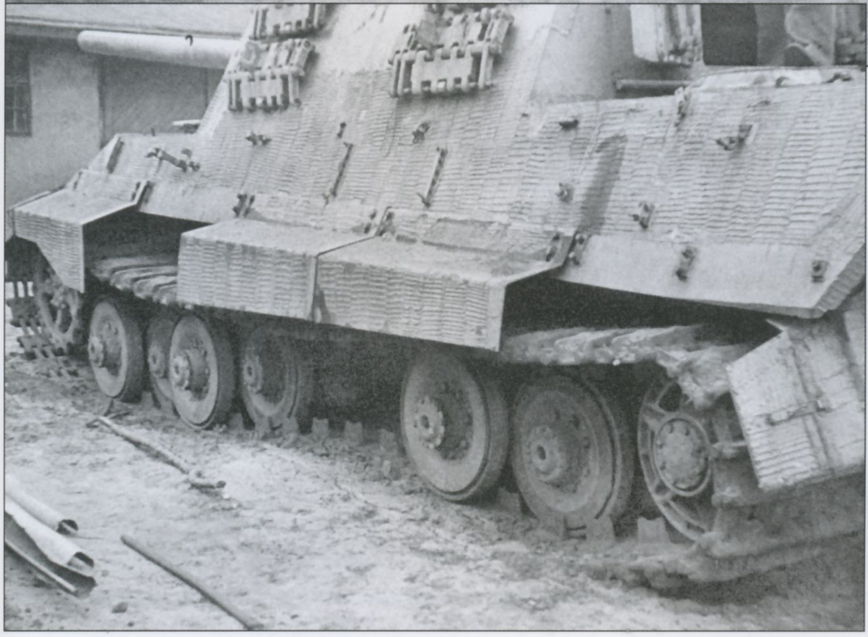
Another view from the left hand side of the Haustenbeck Jagdtiger pilot.

A left rear front shot of the Jagdtiger found at Haustenbeck.

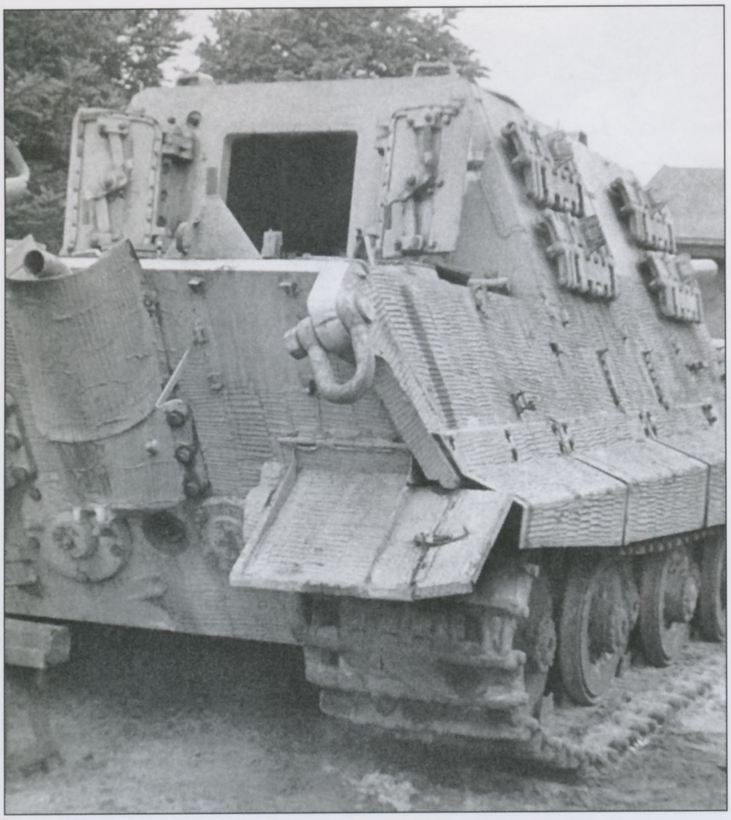




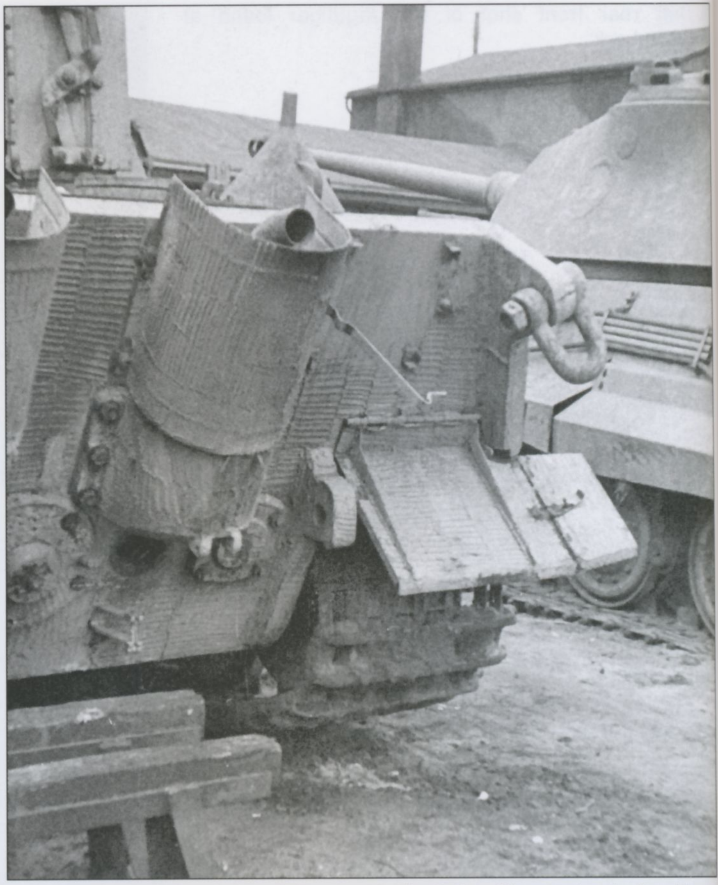
The Haustenbeck Jagdtiger flanked on either side by Kingtiger tanks at Haustenbeck.



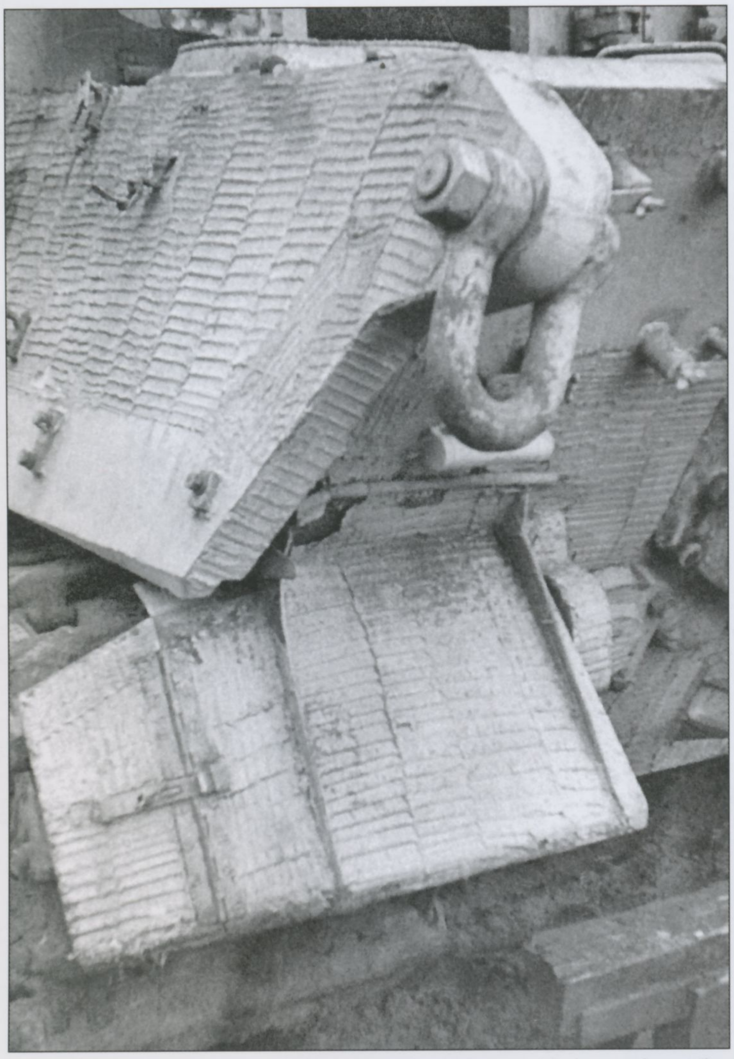
A detail view of the Haustenbeck Jagdtiger showing the skirts and left hull side detail.



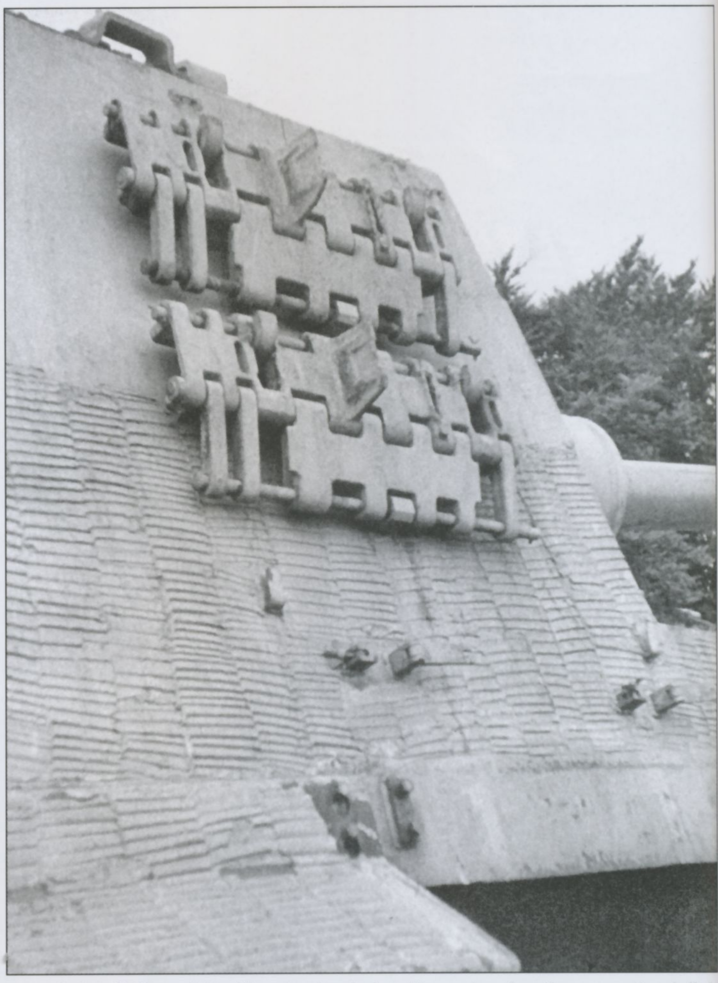
A right rear side view of the Haustenbeck Jagdtiger.



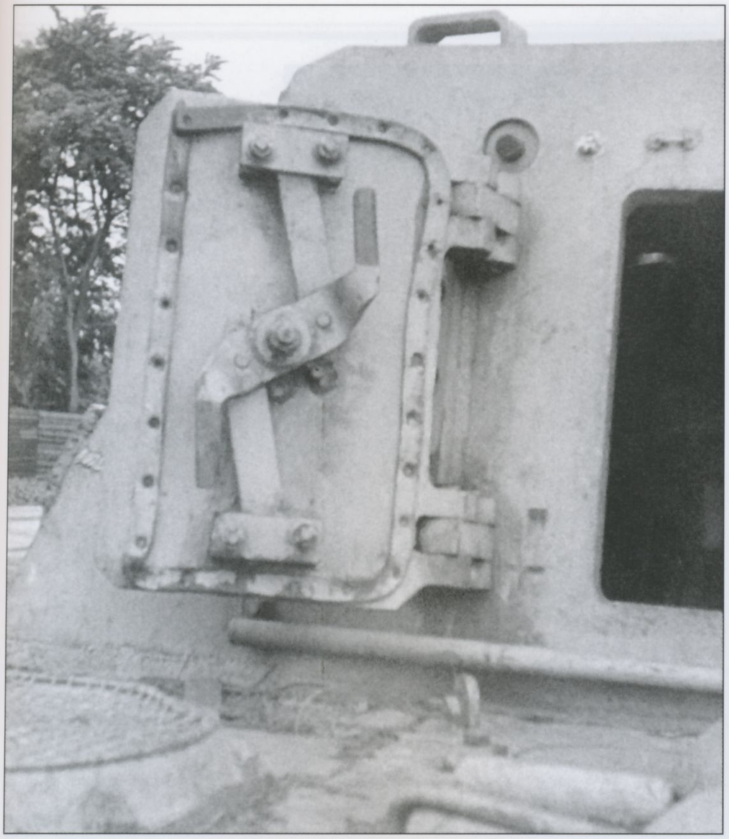
A detail view of the right rear hull of the Haustenbeck Jagdtiger showing details of the exhaust shroud and rear mud guard.



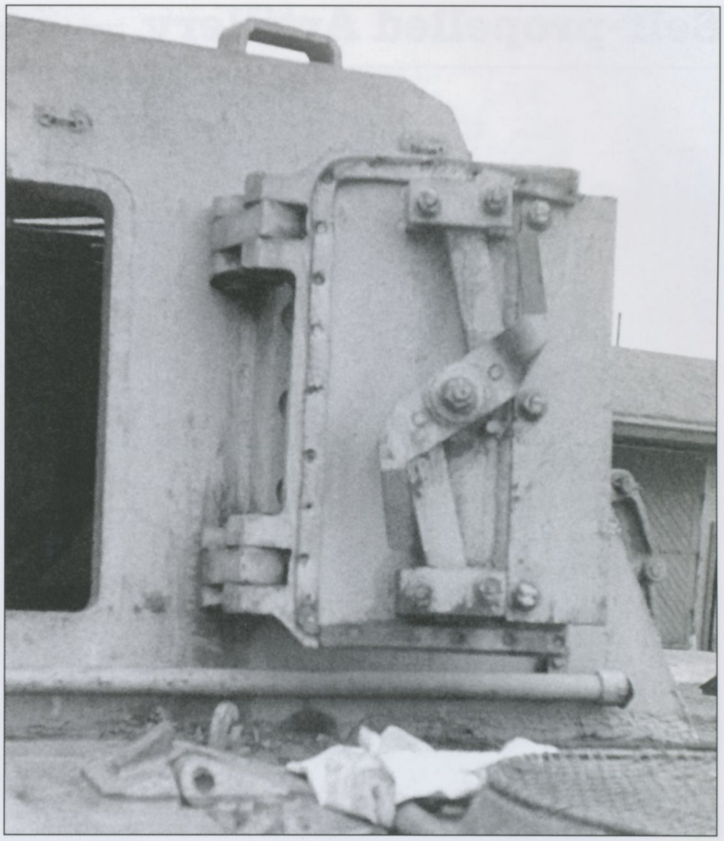
A detail view of the rear tow hook and rear mud guard on the Haustenbeck Jagdtiger.



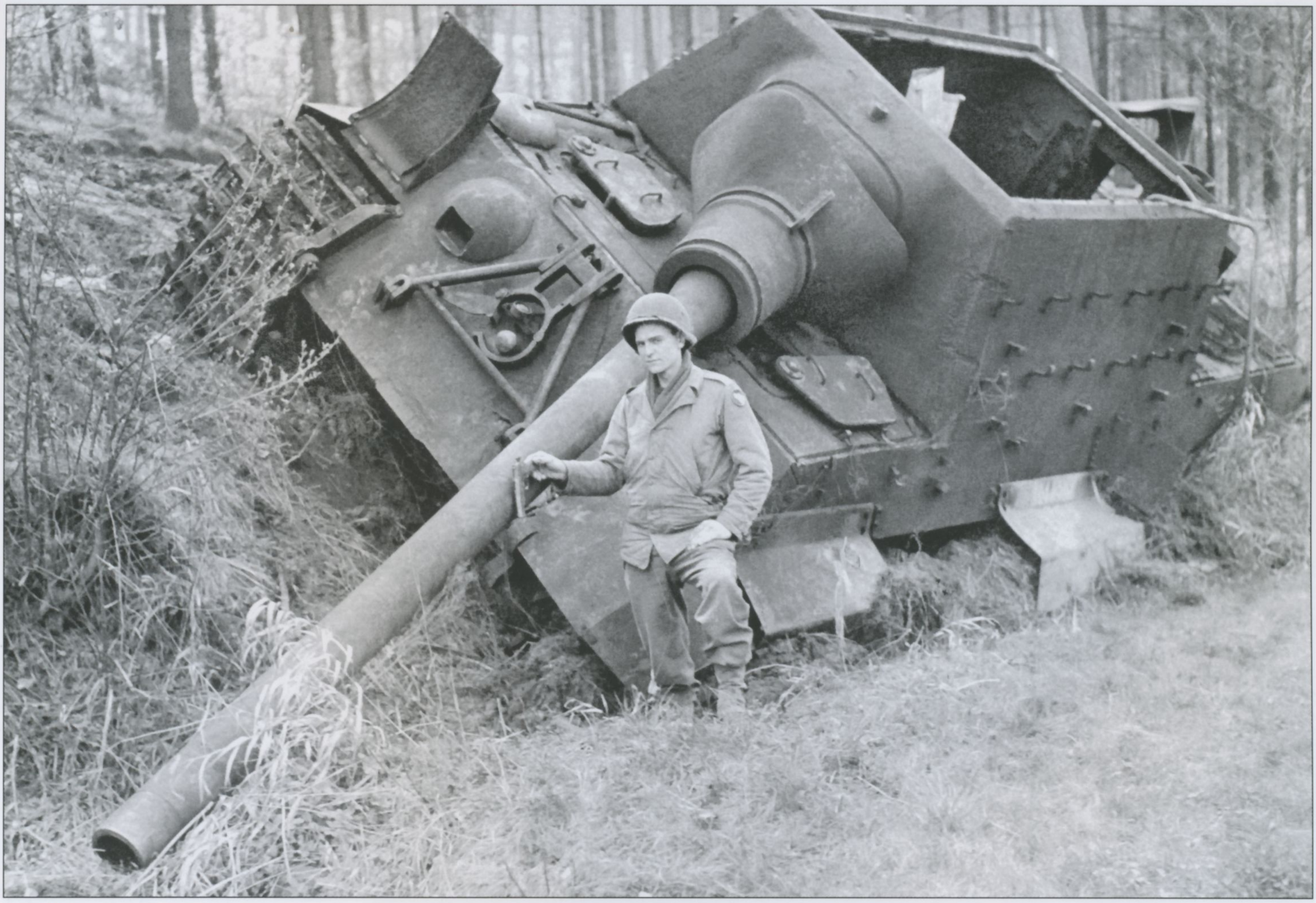
A detail view of the Haustenbeck Jagdtiger showing the spare track link stowage on the right hull side.



A detail view of the left superstructure access door of the Haustenbeck Jagdtiger.

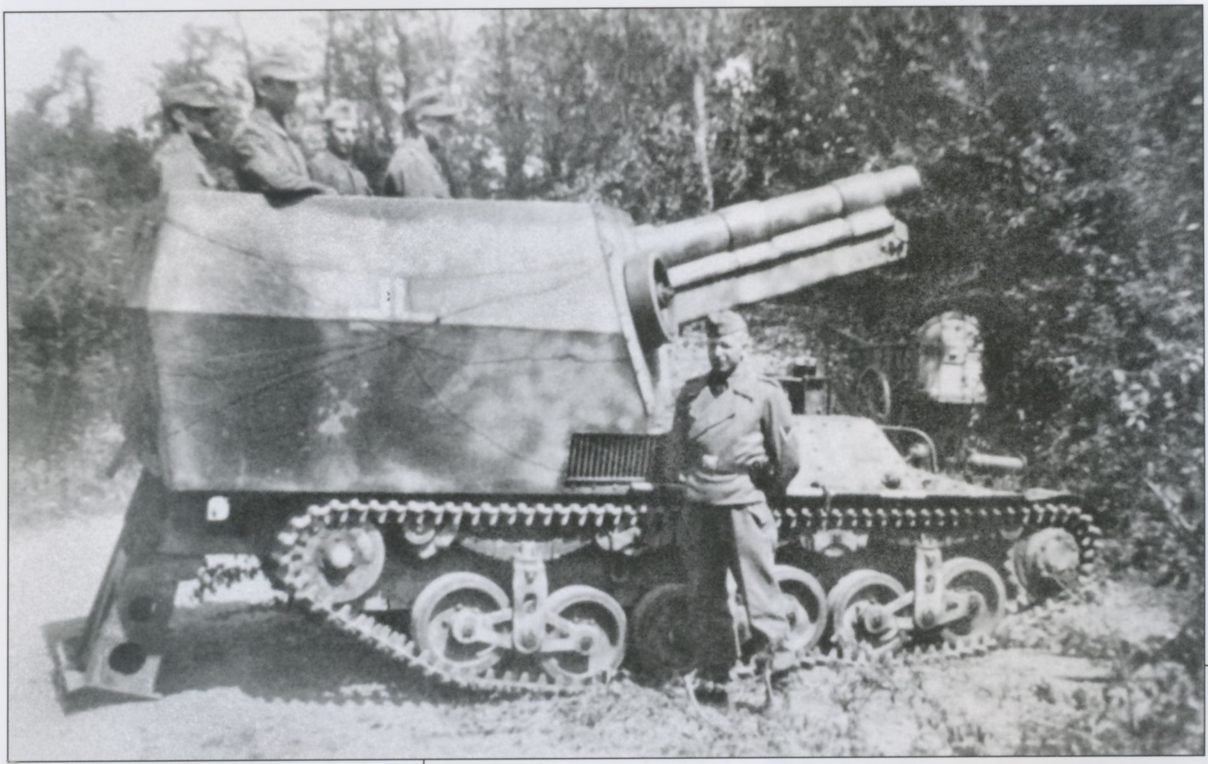


A detail view of the right rear superstructure access door on the Haustenbeck Jagdtiger.

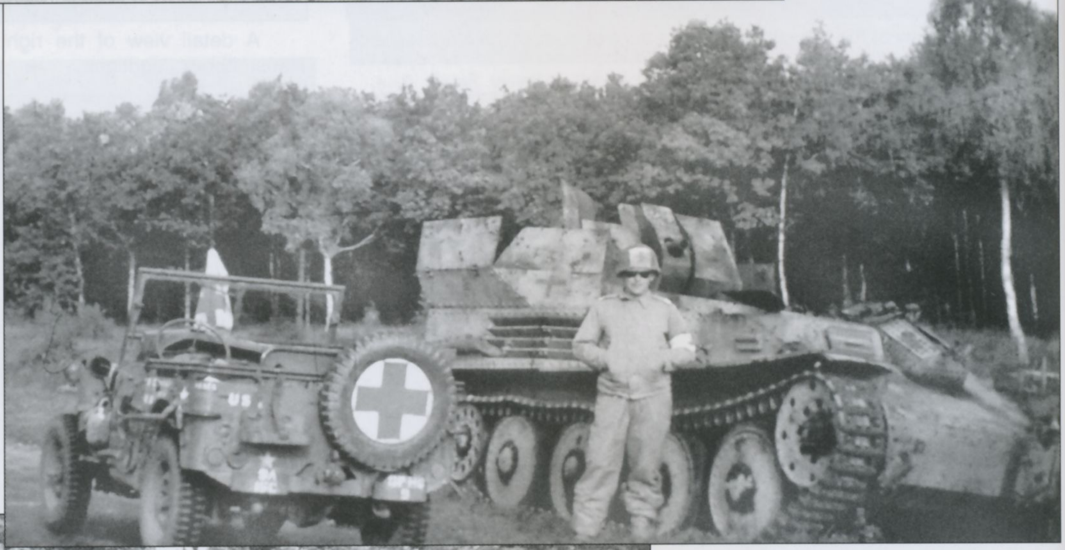


A Jagdtiger of s.Pz.Jg.Abt.512 claimed by a Sherman of the 750th Tank Battalion seen here after it was pushed off a road near Offensen, Germany on 9 April 1945. An internal ammunition fire has blown off the roof.

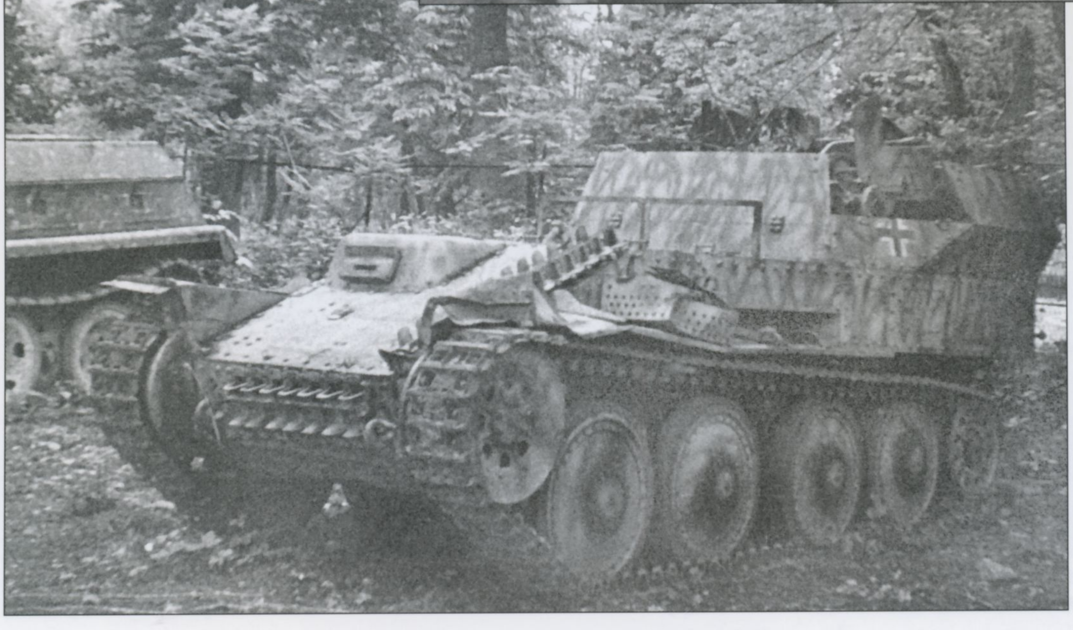
Self-propelled Artillery



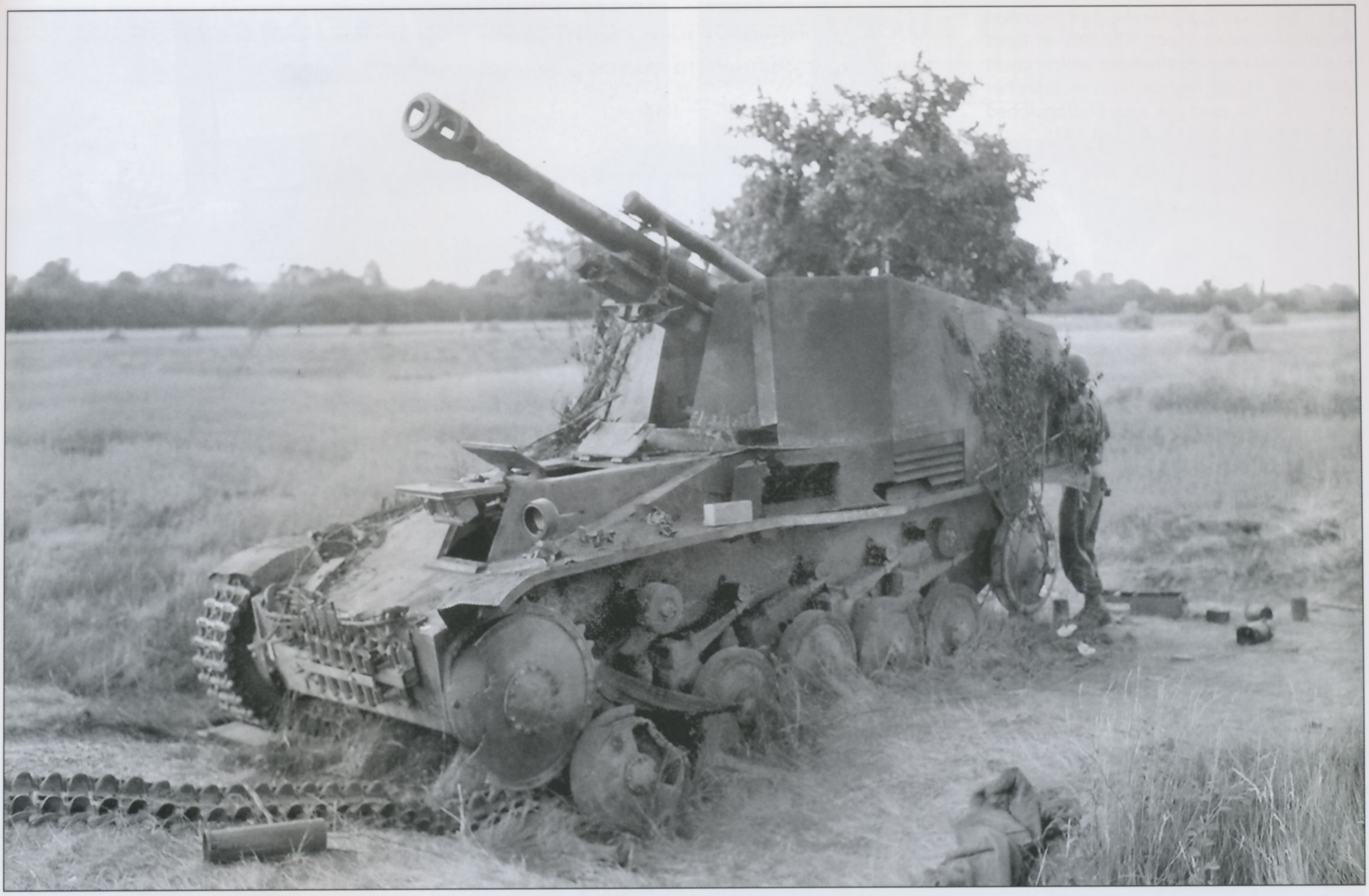
US troops occasionally found personal photos taken by German soldiers, like this shot of a converted Lorraine tractor with 15cm howitzer of the 21.Panzer-Division in France.



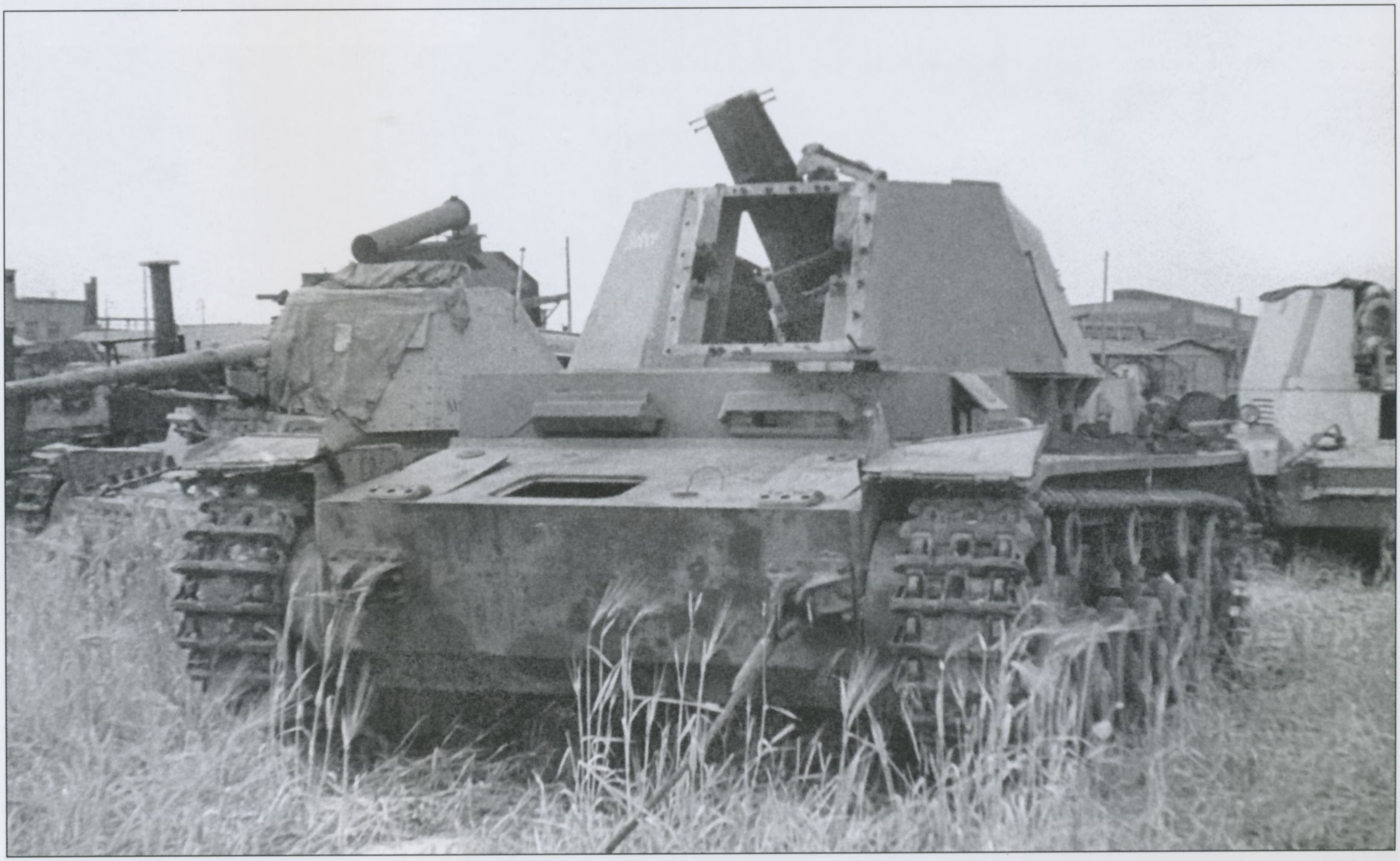
A jeep from the medical detachment of the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion is parked next to a Flakpanzer 38(t) in Normandy in the summer of 1944.



One of the more common anti-aircraft vehicles encountered in France in the summer of 1944 by the US Army was the Flakpanzer 38(t), and example of which is seen here in an Ordnance holding area near Paris.

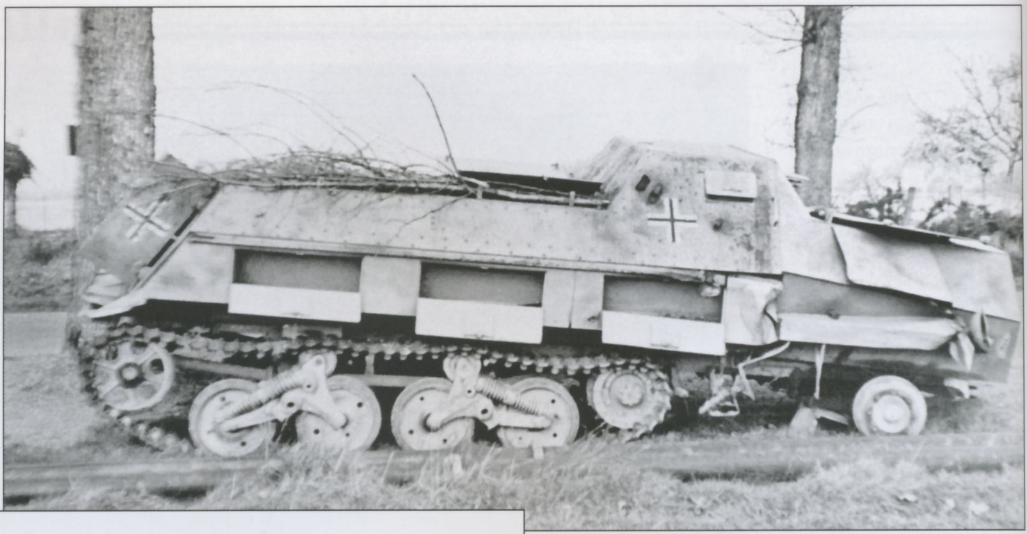


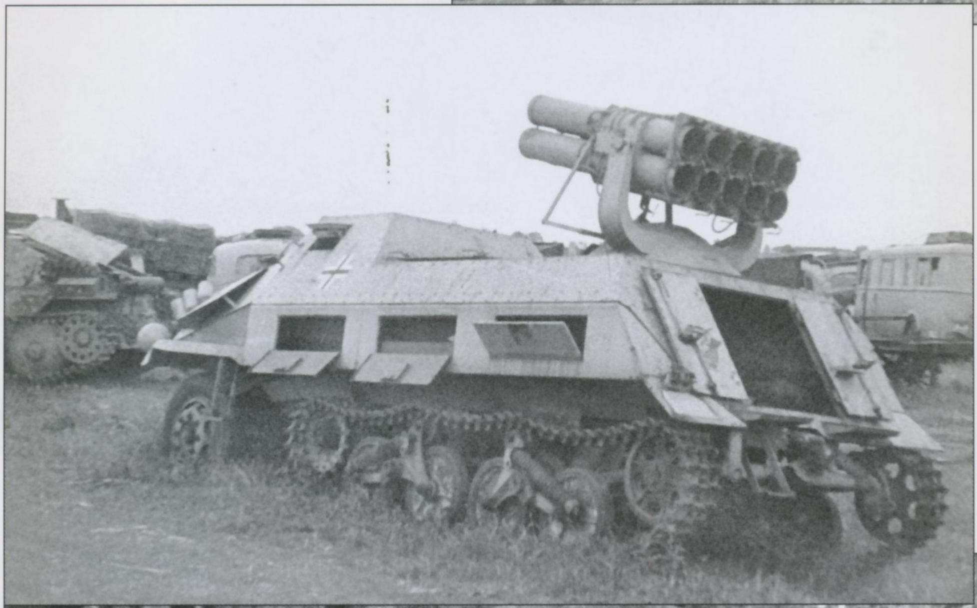
A GI inspects a disabled 10.5cm Wespe self-propelled howitzer near Morteaux on 19 August 1944.



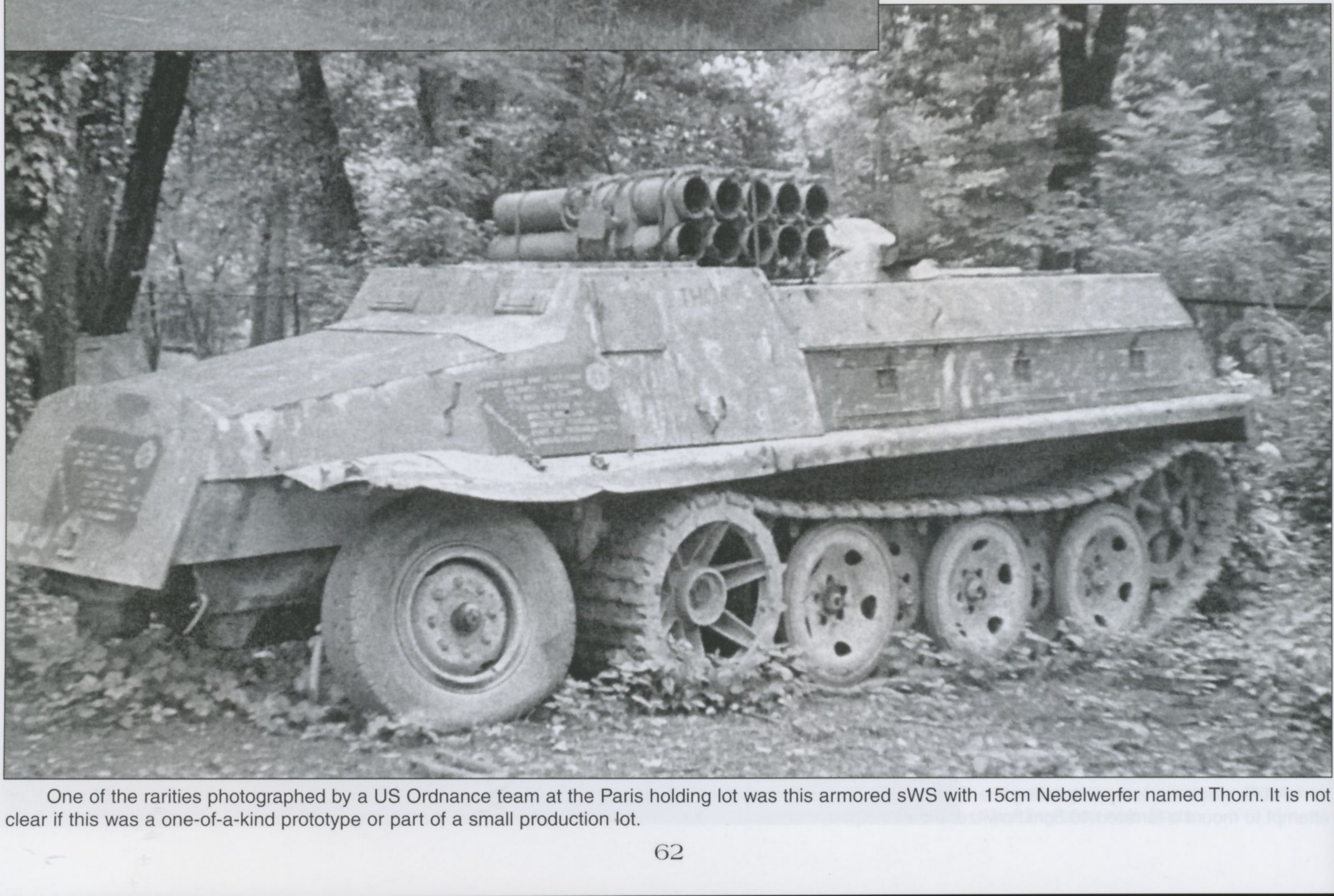
A US ordnance team inspecting the Rheinmetall proving ground at Hillersleben discovered a large number of pilots including Pz.Sf.IVb (3 serie), an attempt to mount a turreted 10.5cm howitzer on a Pz.Kpfw.IV chassis.

The 15cm Nebelwerfer self-propelled batteries were equipped with this armored Maultier Munitionskraftwagen which could carry 20 rocket rounds for the launcher vehicles. This example was photographed in the Falaise pocket in August 1944.

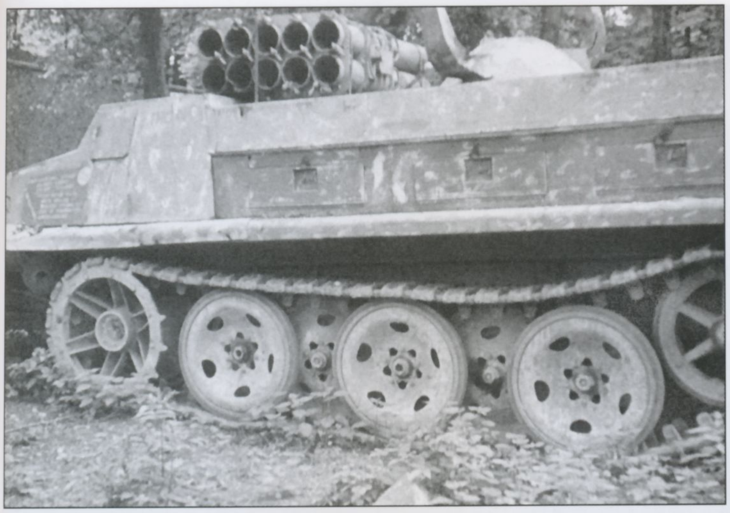




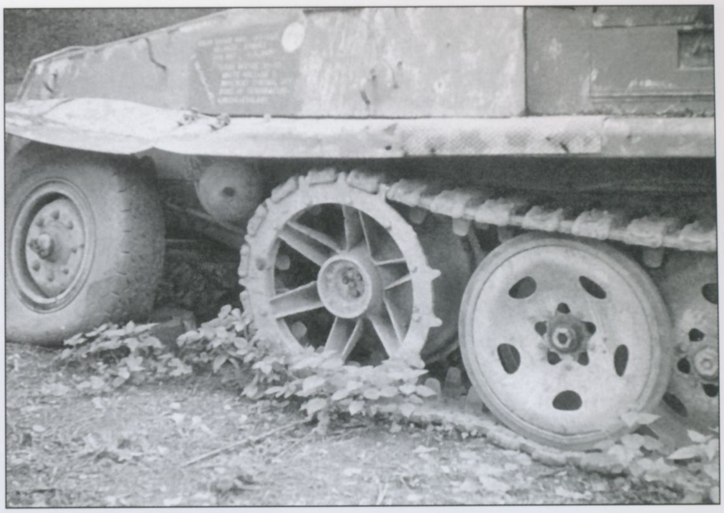
An armored Maultier half-track with Nebelwerfer photographed at the Henschel proving ground in 1945.



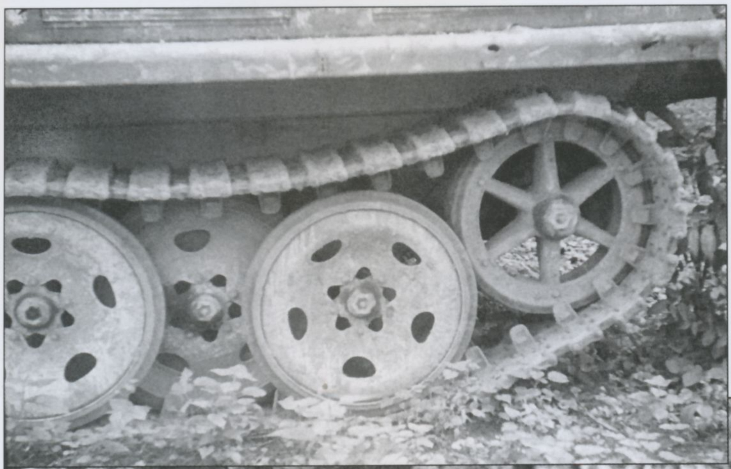
One of the rarities photographed by a US Ordnance team at the Paris holding lot was this armored sWS with 15cm Nebelwerfer named Thorn. It is not clear if this was a one-of-a-kind prototype or part of a small production lot.



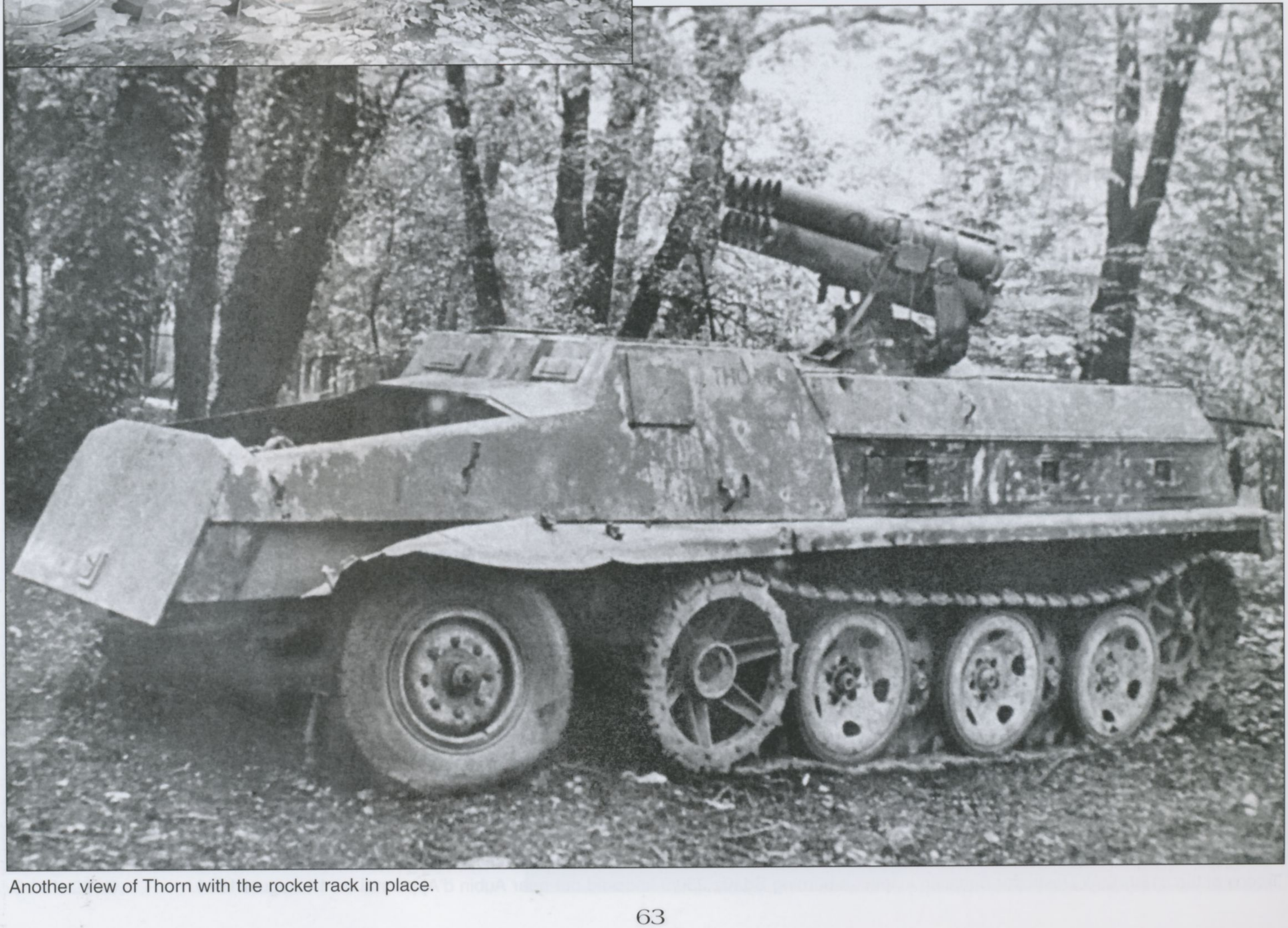
A closer view with the rocket rack off the trunnion.



A close-up photo of the drive sprocket and suspension detail of Thorn.



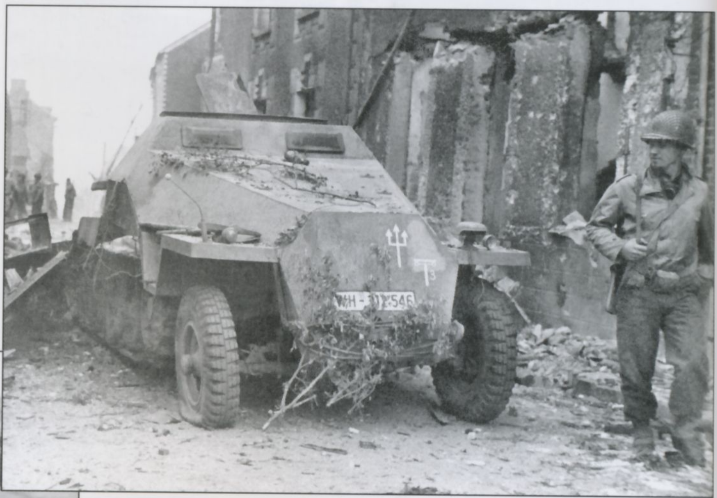
A close-up of the rear road-wheels and idler wheel of Thorn.

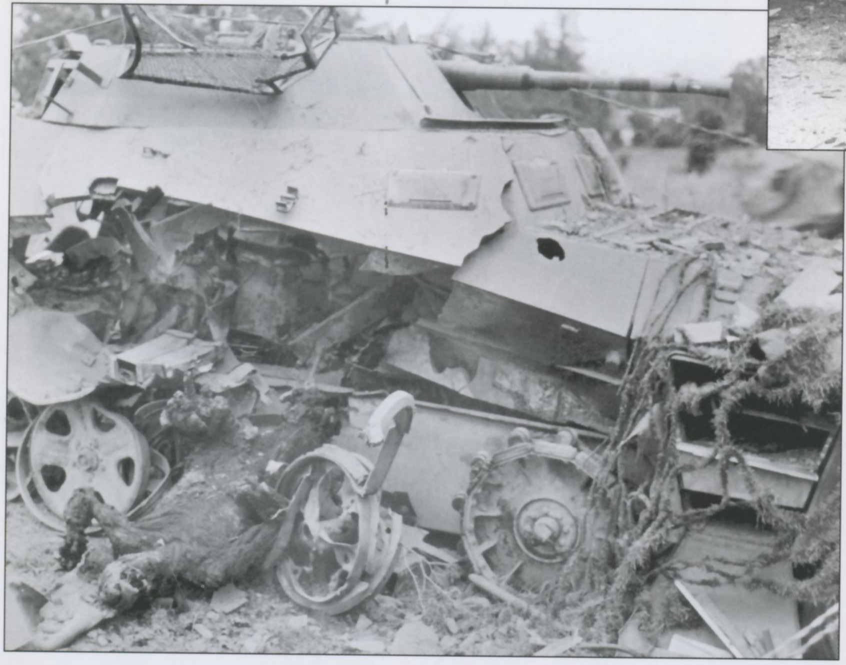


Another view of Thorn with the rocket rack in place.

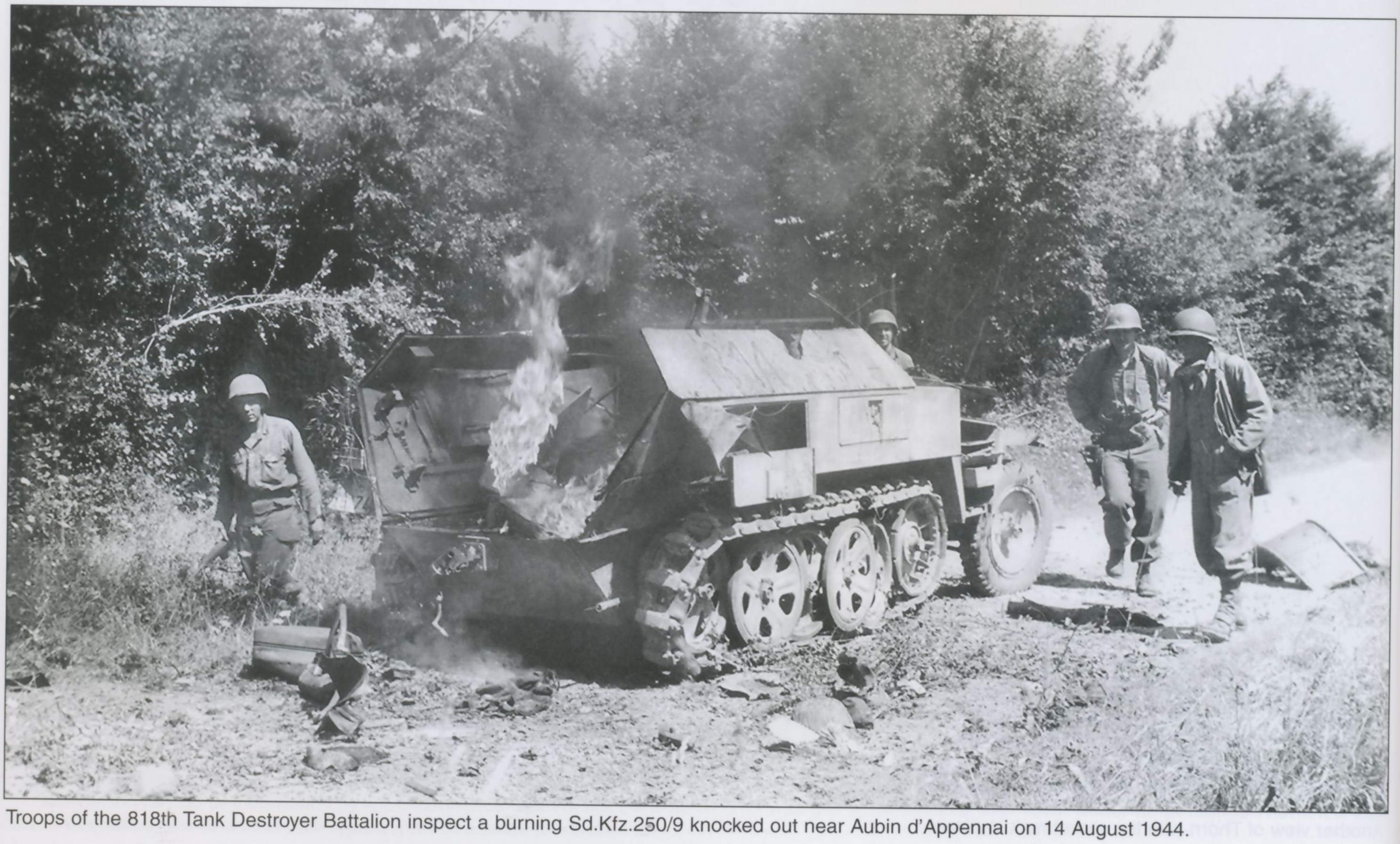
Half-Tracks

A GI walks past a Sd.Kfz.251 Ausf.D of a towed anti-tank gun company of the 2.Panzer-Division in France in July 1944.

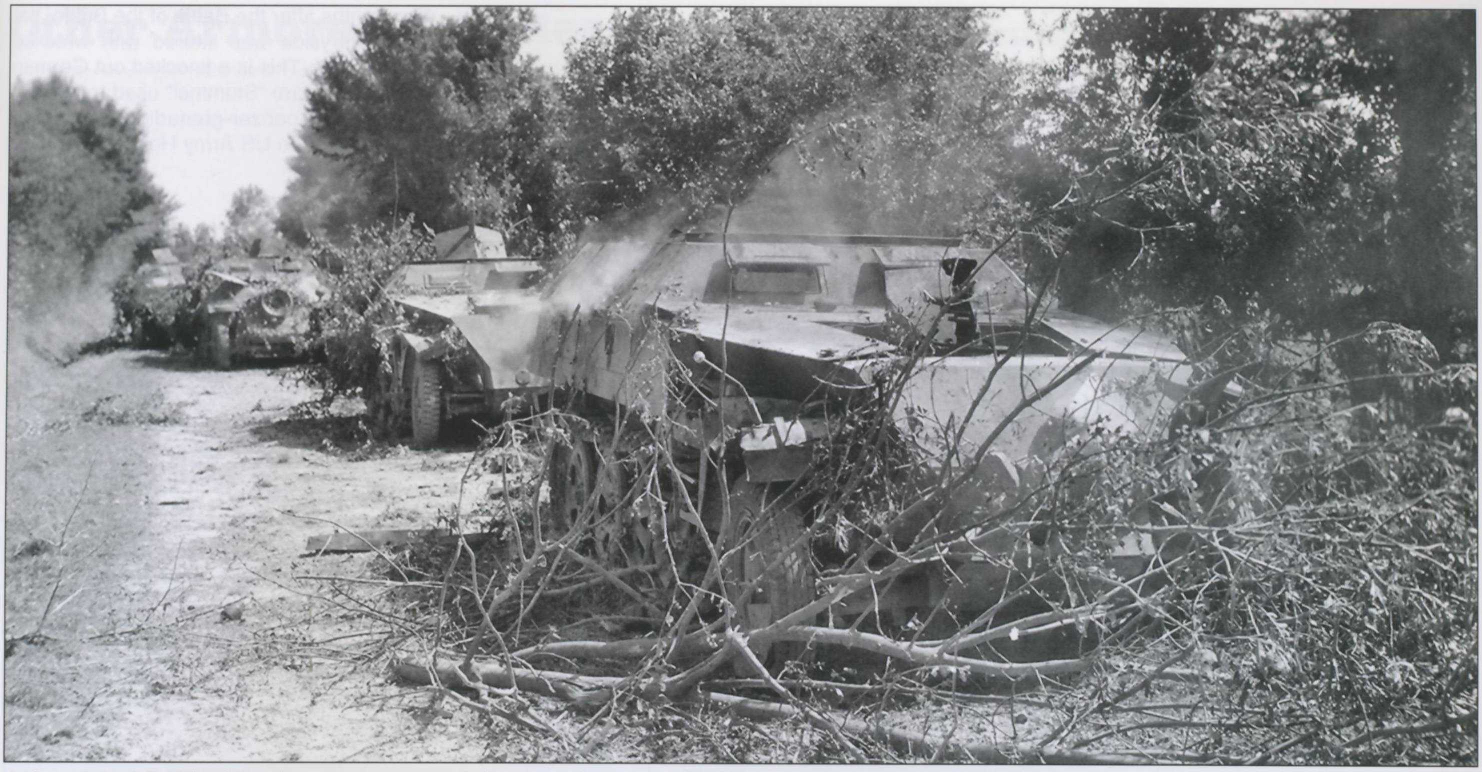




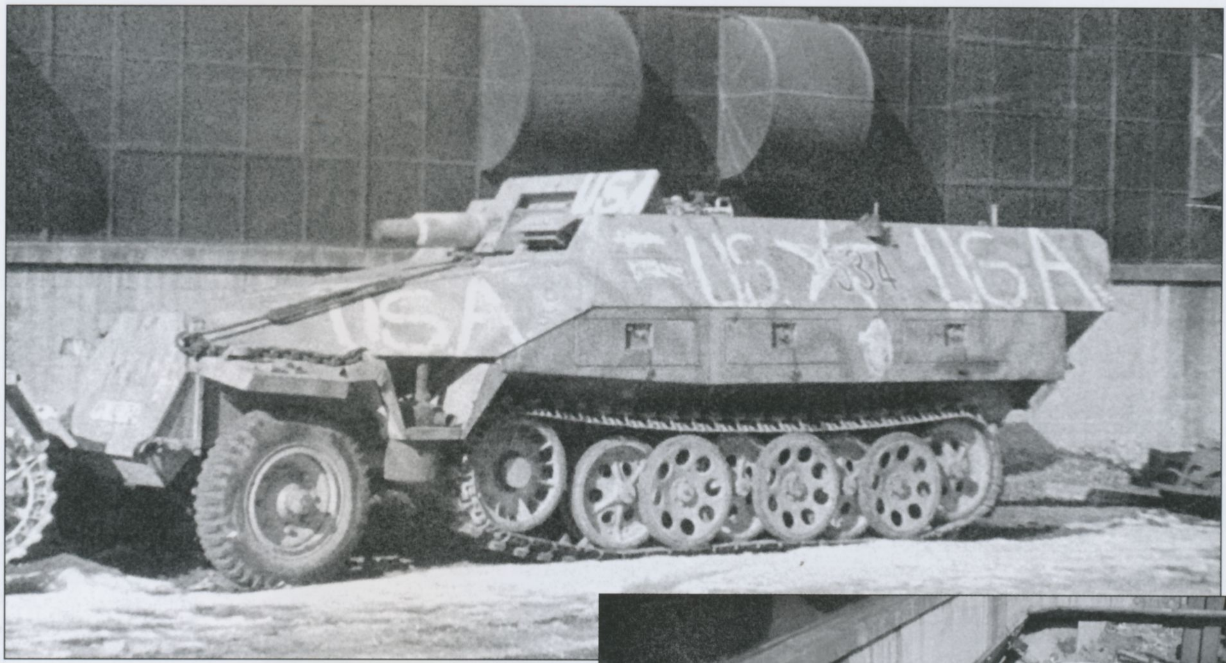
A German half-track column led by a Sd.Kfz.250 knocked out by the 818th Tank Destroyer Battalion was photographed near Aubin d'Appennai on 14 August 1944.



Troops of the 818th Tank Destroyer Battalion inspect a burning Sd.Kfz.250/9 knocked out near Aubin d'Appennai on 14 August 1944.

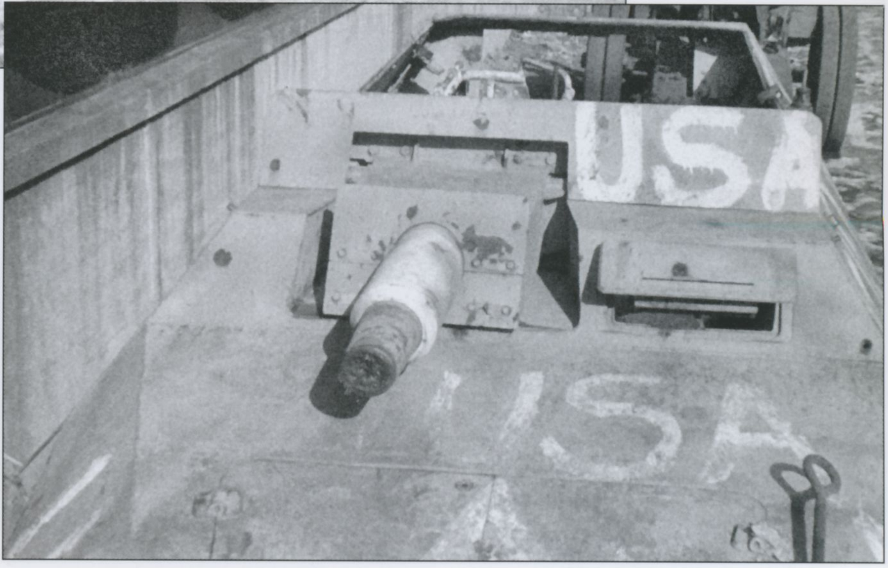


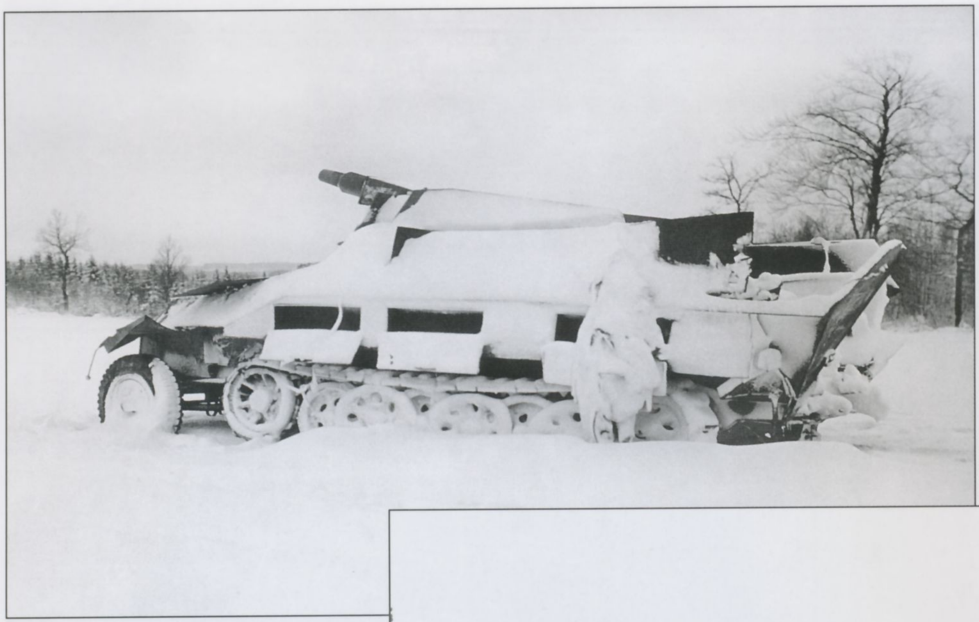
A demolished Sd.Kfz.250 column knocked out during the fighting near Marigny, France on 1 December 1944.



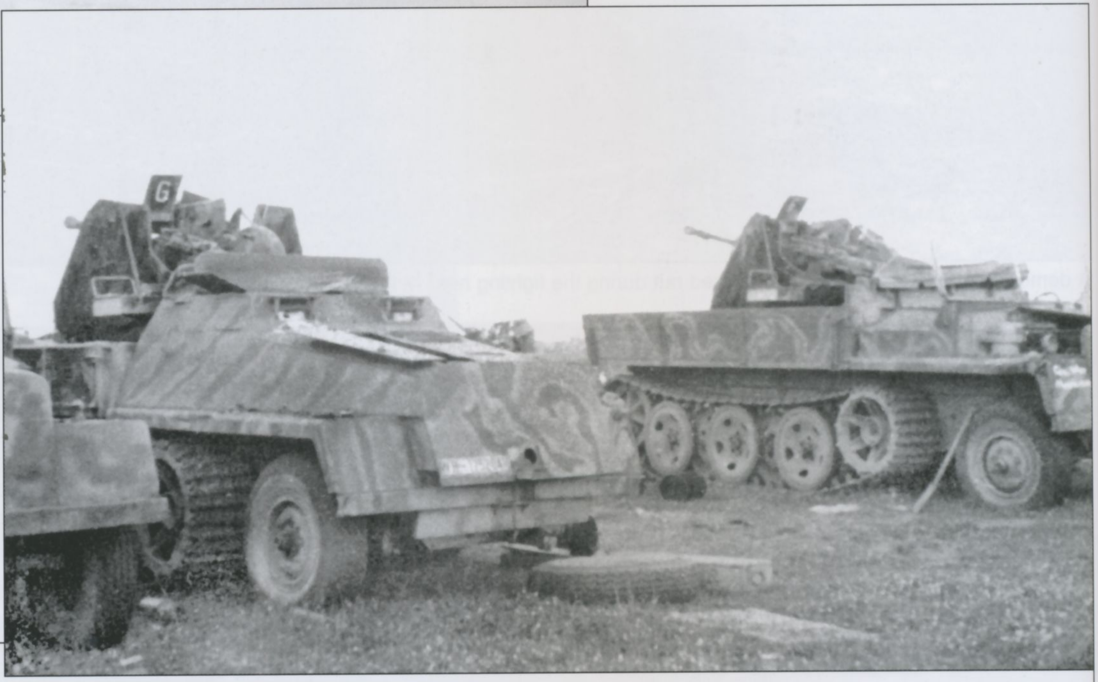
This 2.Panzer-Division Sd.Kfz.251/9 Stummel was captured by US troops in the Ardennes fighting and used in US service for a time, hence its hastily painted US markings. It was later sent back to the US for technical evaluation.

Another view of the 2.Panzer-Division Stummel providing a more detailed version of the original configuration of the 7.5cm howitzer mounting on the Sd.Kfz.251/9.

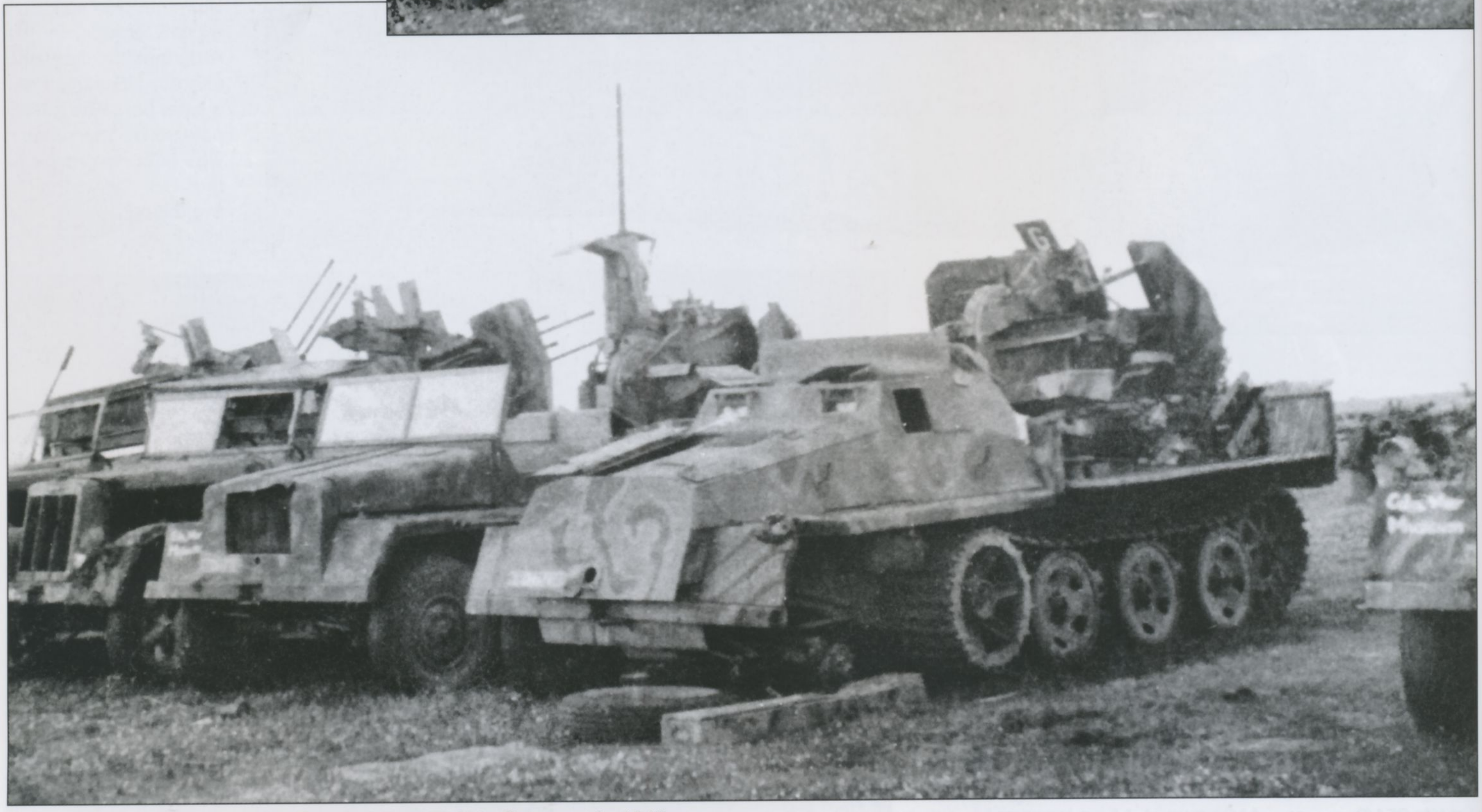




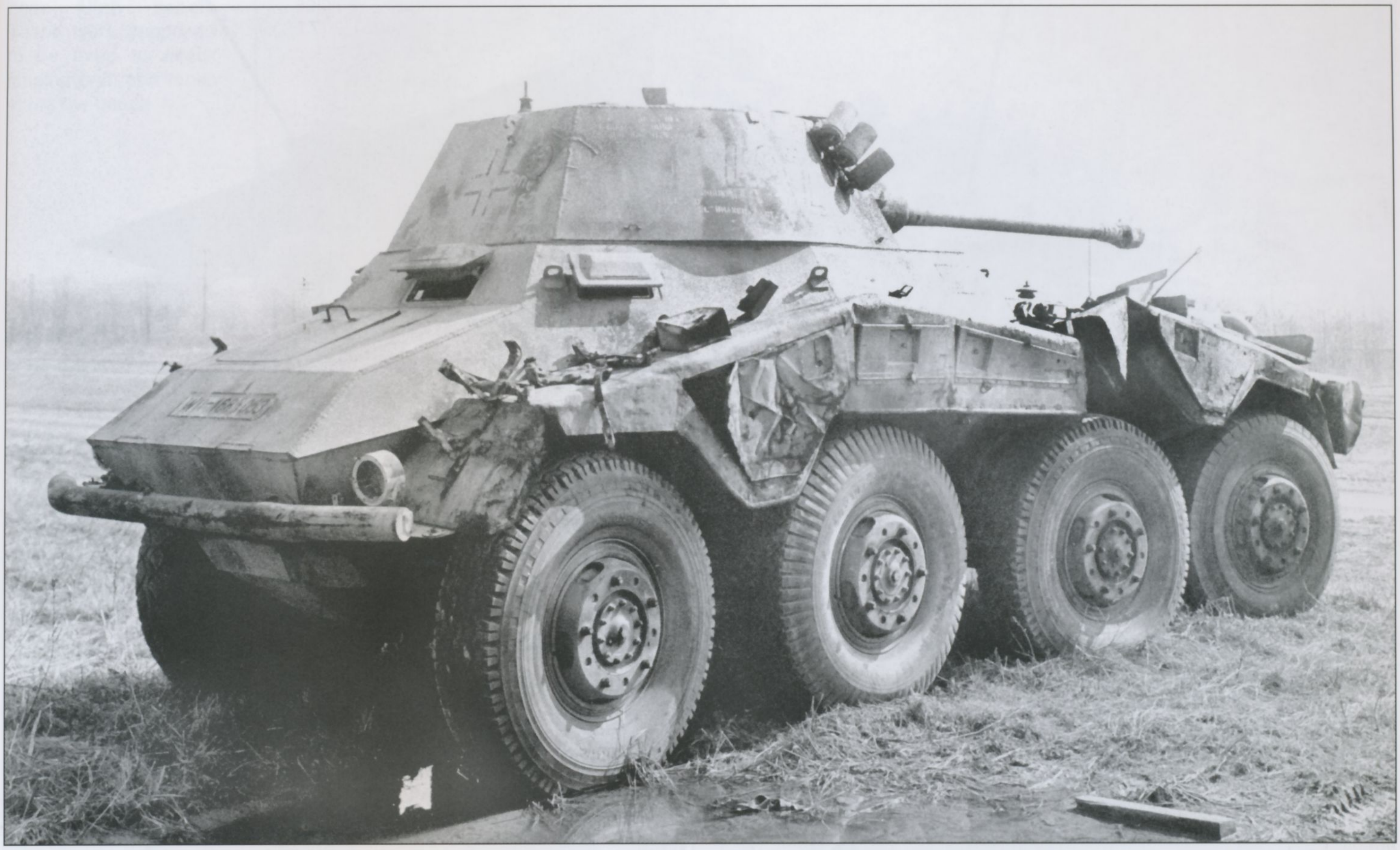
For months after the Battle of the Bulge, the Belgian countryside was littered with wrecked armored vehicles. This is a knocked out German Sd.Kfz.251/9 (7.5cm) "Stummel" used to provide fire support for panzer-grenadier units, and photographed by the US Army Howell mission.



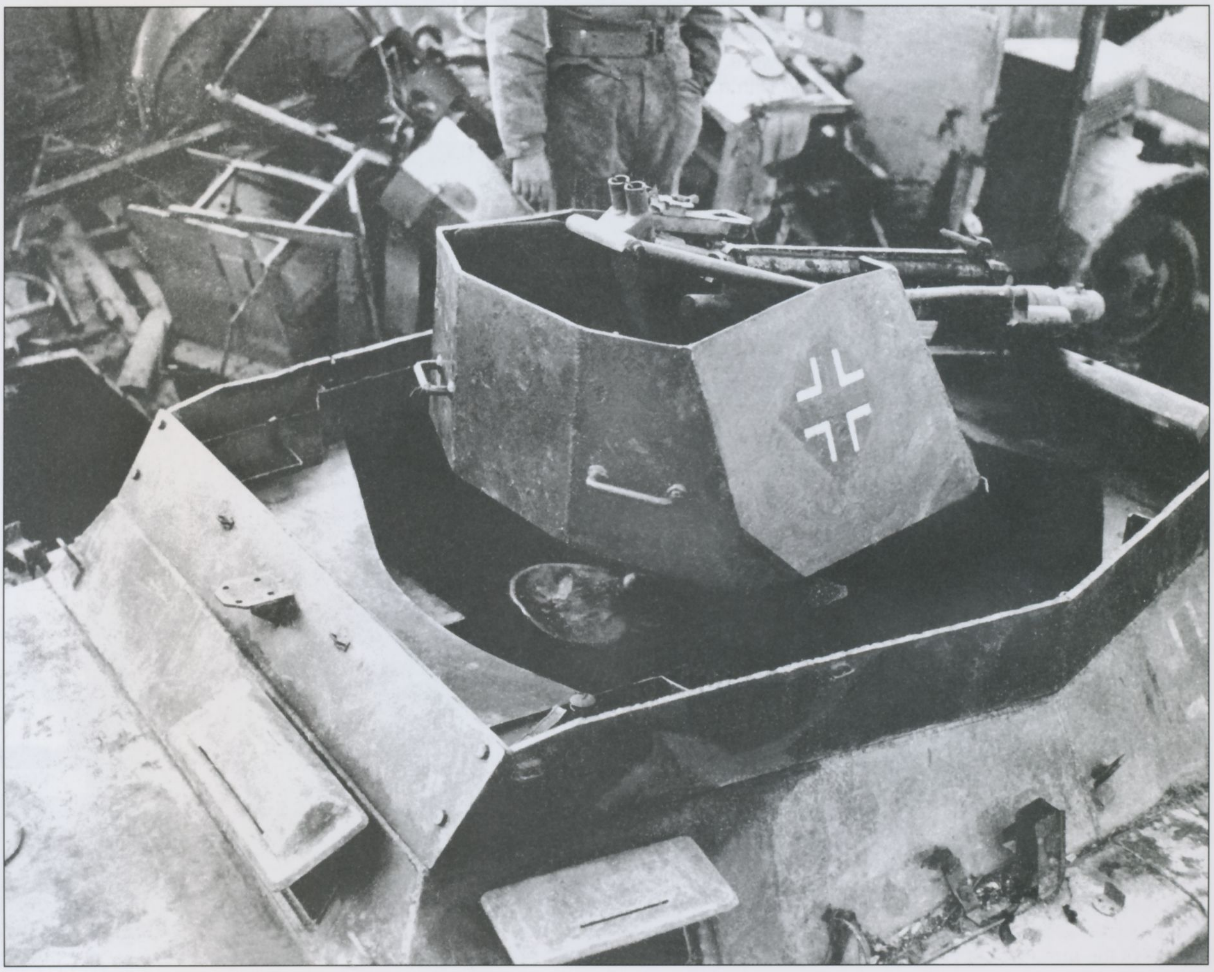
These two sWS halftracks with 3.7cm anti-aircraft guns were captured by the Polish 1st Armored Division in Germany in 1945. The nearer sWS is the type with the armored cab.



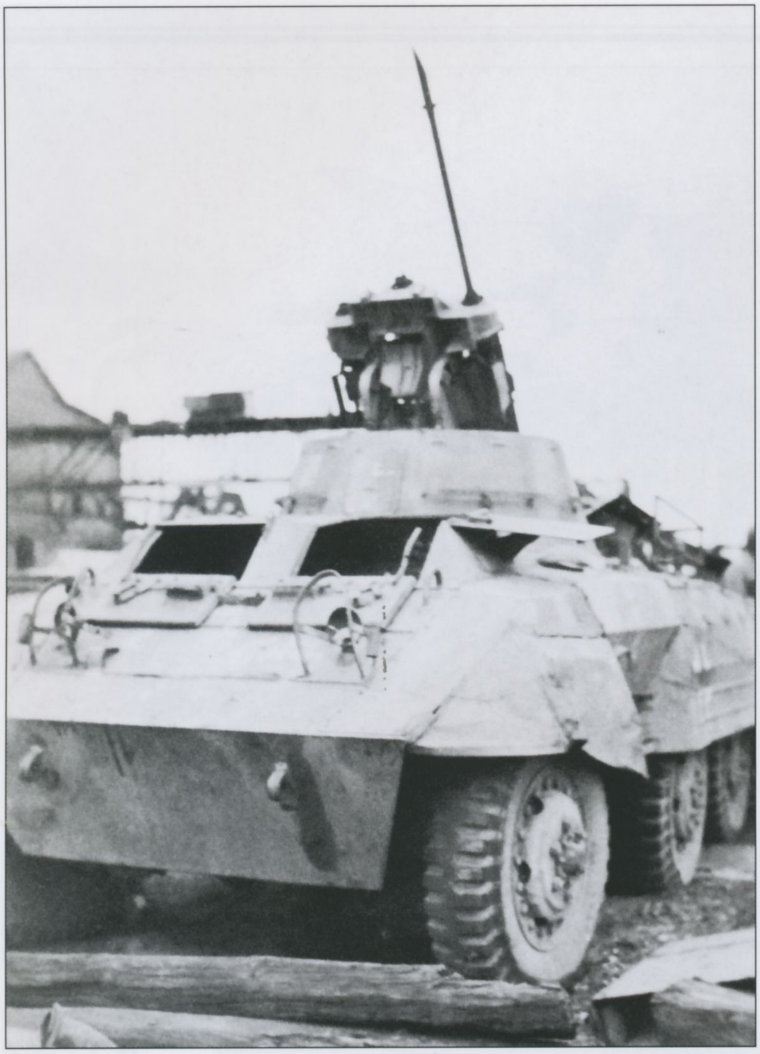
A view of the armored cab sWS with 3.7cm FlaK in Germany in 1945.



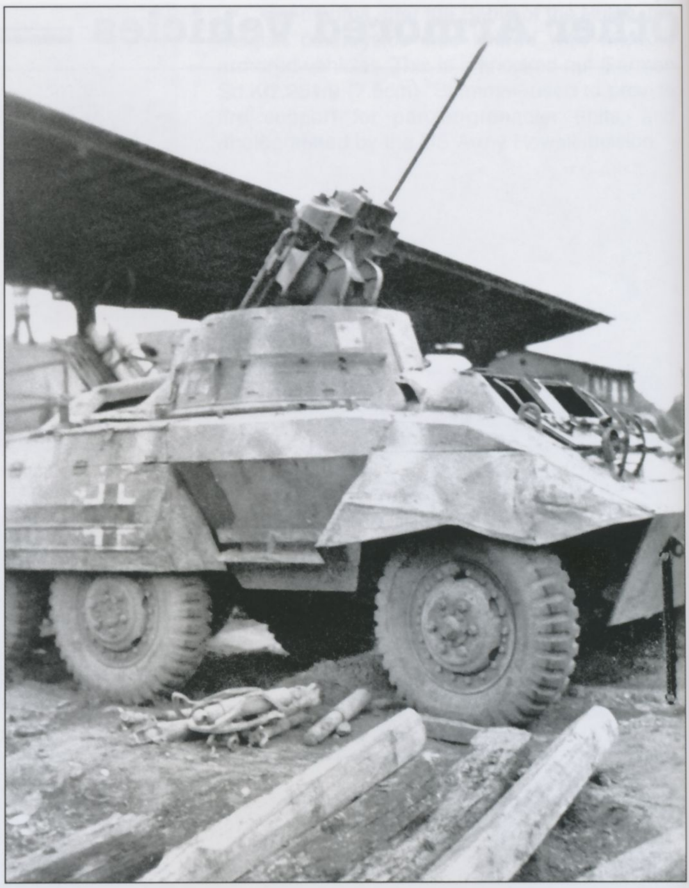
This Sd.Kfz.234 Puma armored car was the example shipped back to Aberdeen Proving Ground for trials. It was subsequently scrapped.



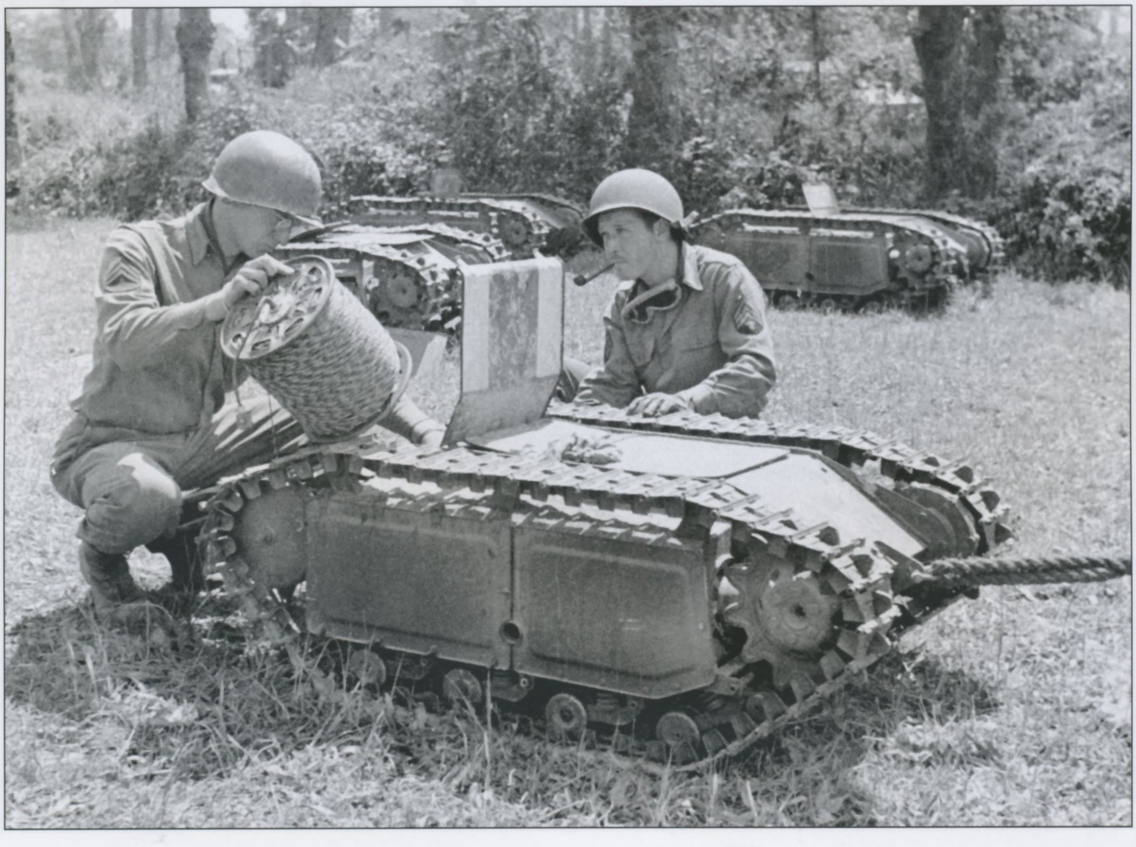
One of the more unusual versions of the Sd.Kfz.234 was this one which was apparently a prototype for a version armed with the 2cm KwK38.



While captured US M8 armored cars were not particularly rare, this version certainly was. It has been reequipped with a 1.5cm Drilling anti-aircraft cannon mount instead of its usual 37mm gun.

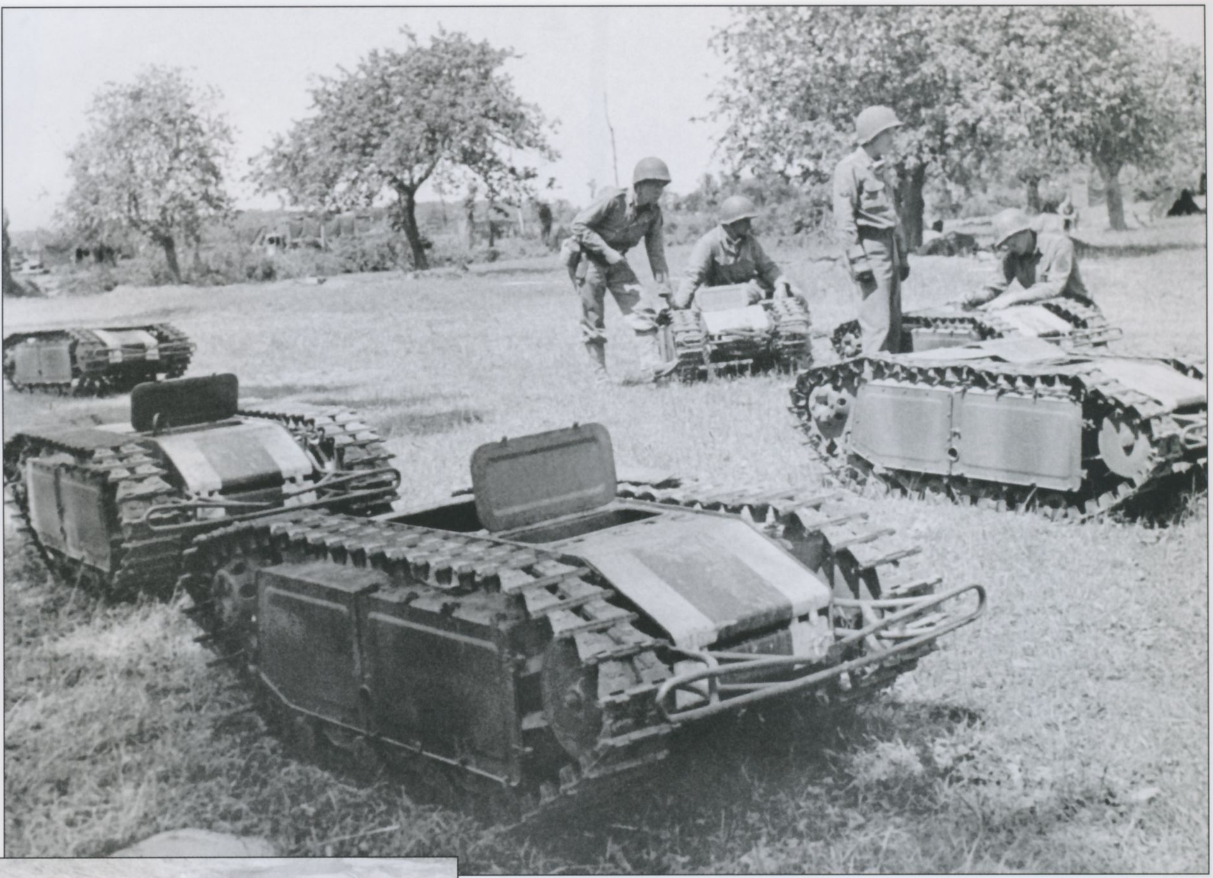


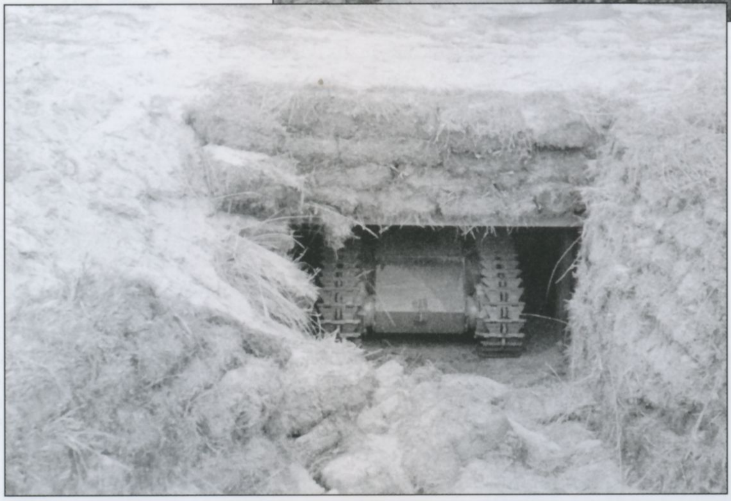
Another view of the M8 armored car with Drilling mount. It carries a tactical number "342" on the rear side of the turret.



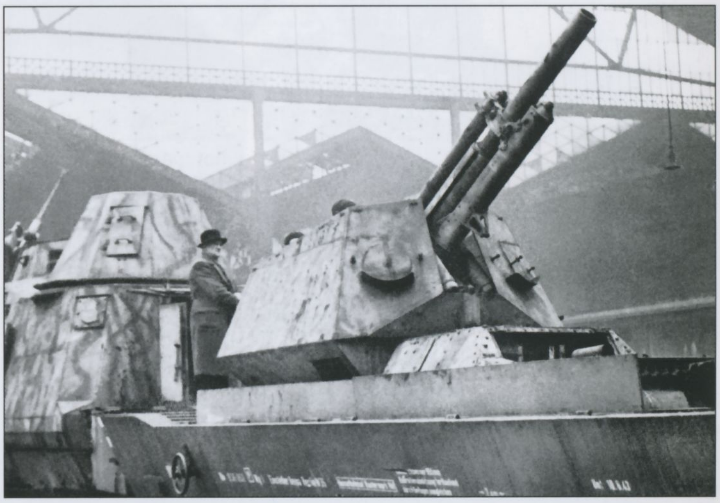
The Goliath remote control mines were deployed with several German static defense divisions on the Normandy coast in the weeks prior to the D-Day landing. They were not widely used in combat, often due to the disruption of the wire control link. These were found by US troops near Utah Beach.

Another view of a group of Goliath mines near Utah beach. These were supposed to be used to attack landing craft and tanks along the beach.

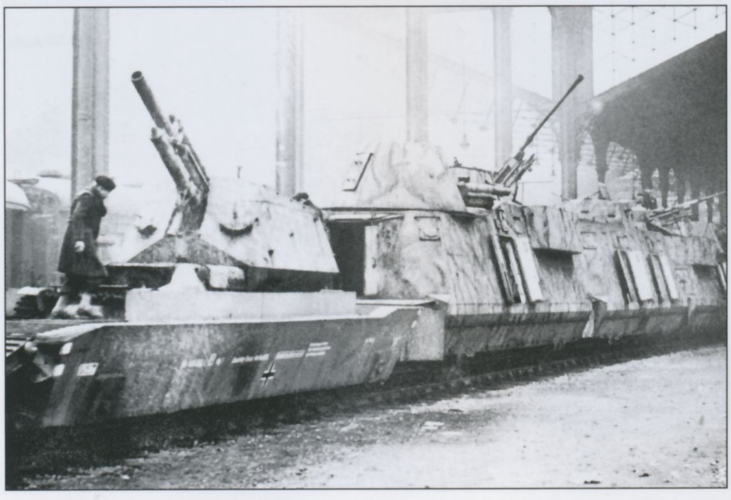




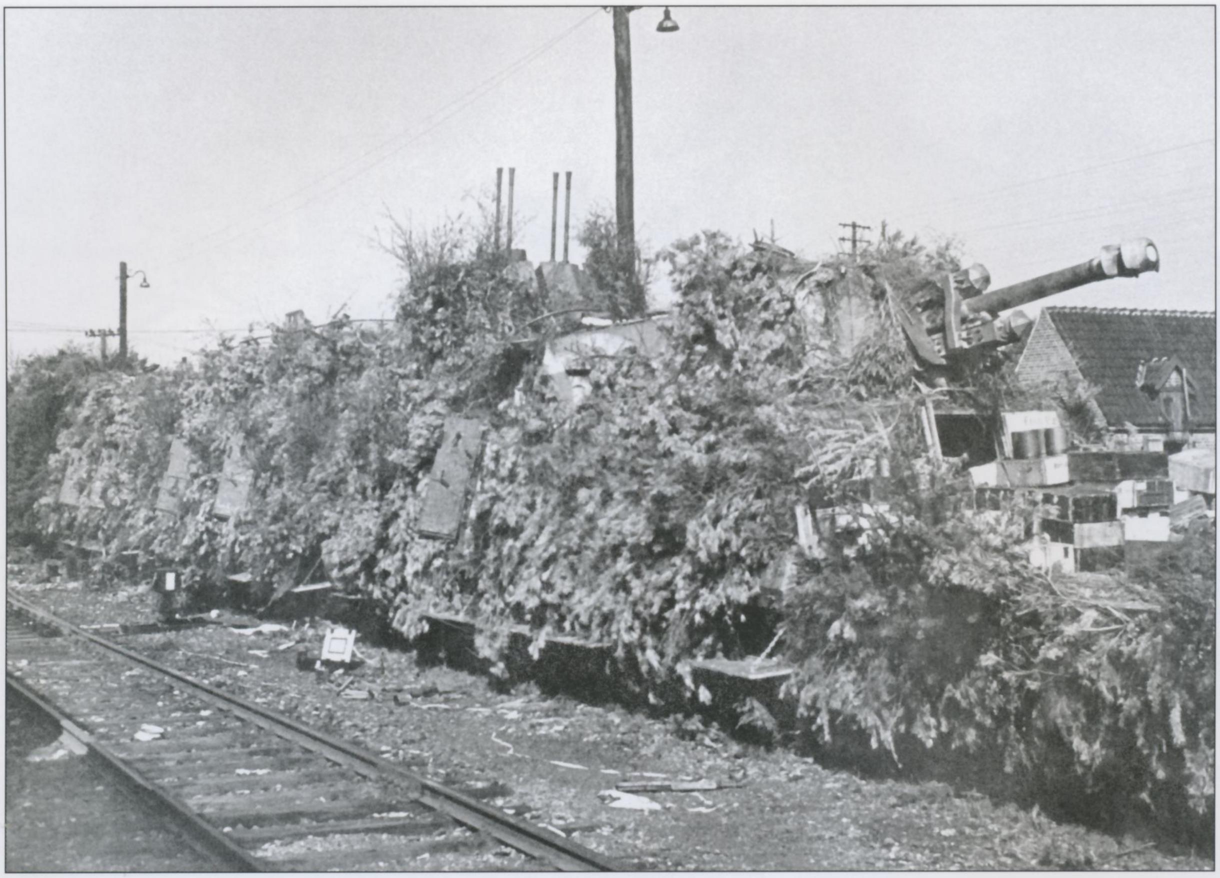
The Goliaths were deployed in small hidden caves along the beach. Attempts by the WN 5 strongpoint at Utah Beach to use their Goliaths failed when the Allied preparatory bombardment severed the wire control lines leading to the command bunker.



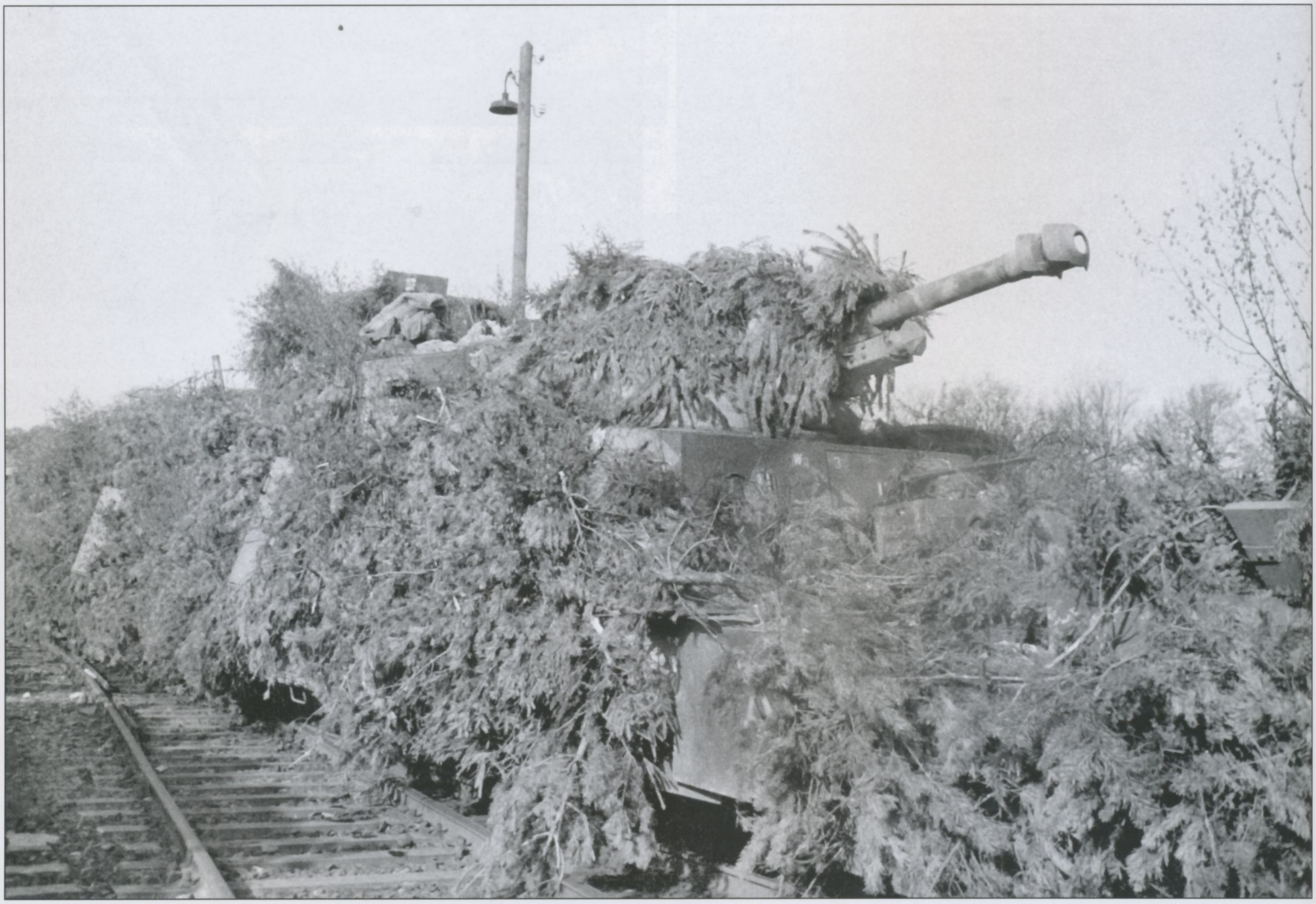
This is Panzerzug 32, a German armored train captured on 7 September 1944 by French troops in the station of St. Berain-sur-Dheune. This artillery car carries a Chennilette Lorraine converted into a self-propelled howitzer using a Soviet 122mm M30 howitzer.



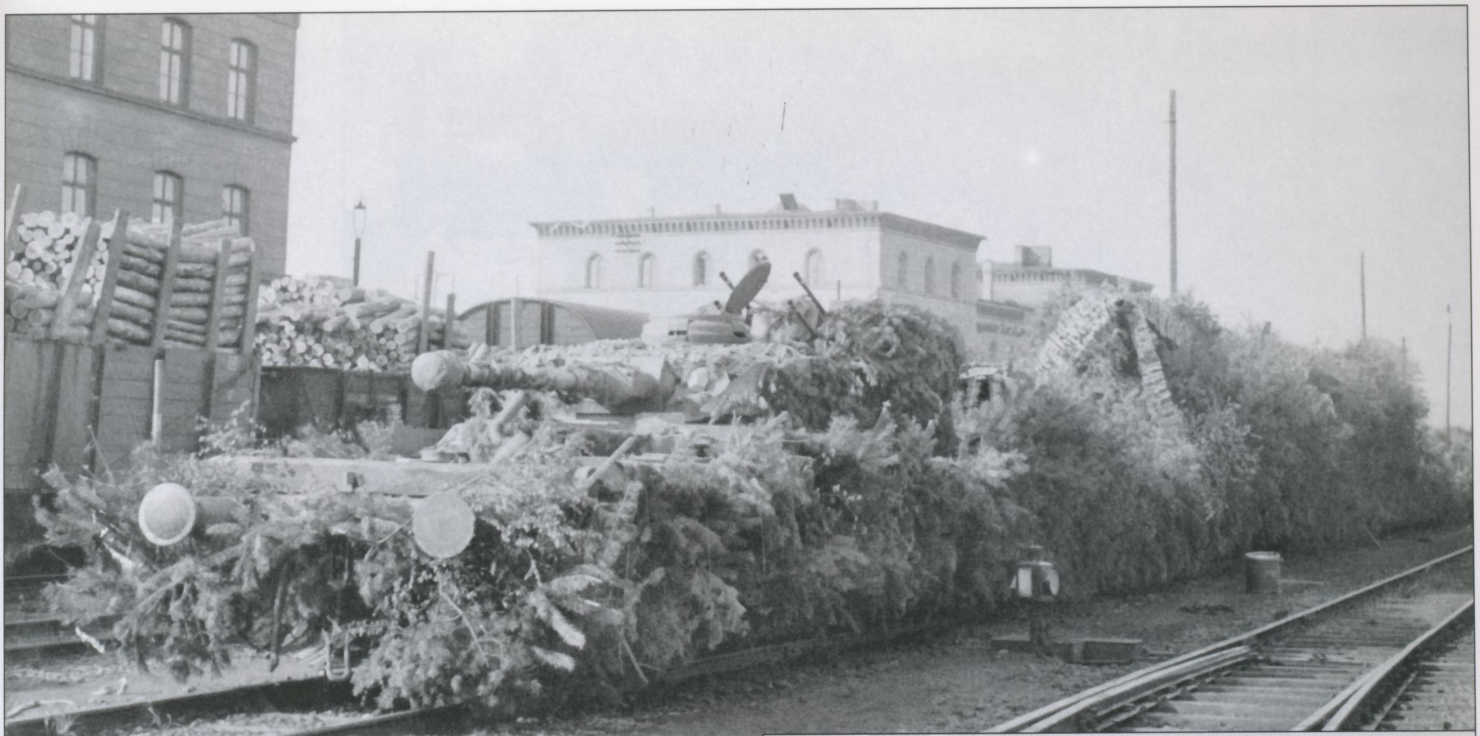
Another view of Panzerzug 32 after its capture. This train became famous after the war as one of the elements in the film “La Battaille du rail” in which it was blown up.



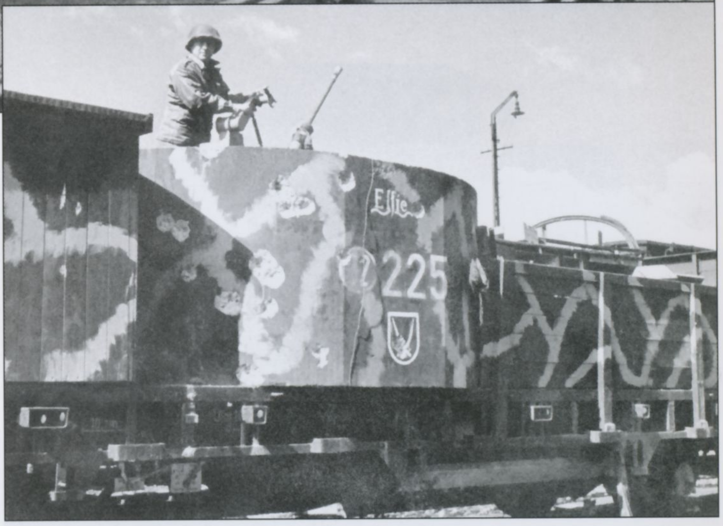
This armored train was captured by US forces near Hagenow, Germany in May 1945. The nearest flatcar carries a turreted 10.5cm leFH18 and behind it is a car with a 2cm FlaK 38 mounting. These trains were not commonly used on the Western Front, and this may be a train that had retreated from the Eastern Front where they were widely used in anti-partisan warfare.



This is another flatcar on the same train with a second 10.5cm howitzer. The entire train is heavily draped in foliage to camouflage the train against its main nemesis- enemy air attack.

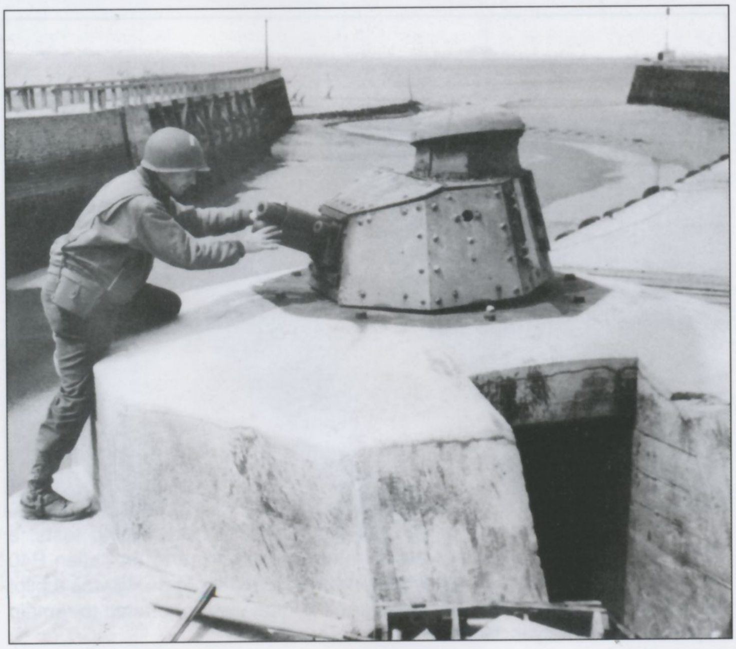


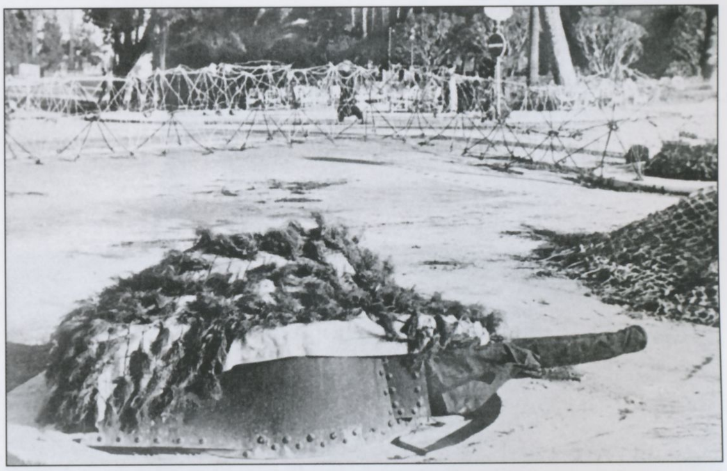
This shows the other end of the armored train armed with a flat-car mounting a Pz.Kpfw.IV turret.



A GI looks over a 2cm flak cannon mounted in a concrete parapet for train defense on a train captured in Germany in April 1945. These types of protected mounts were used on armored trains as well as on regular transport trains for self-defense against Allied fighter-bombers.

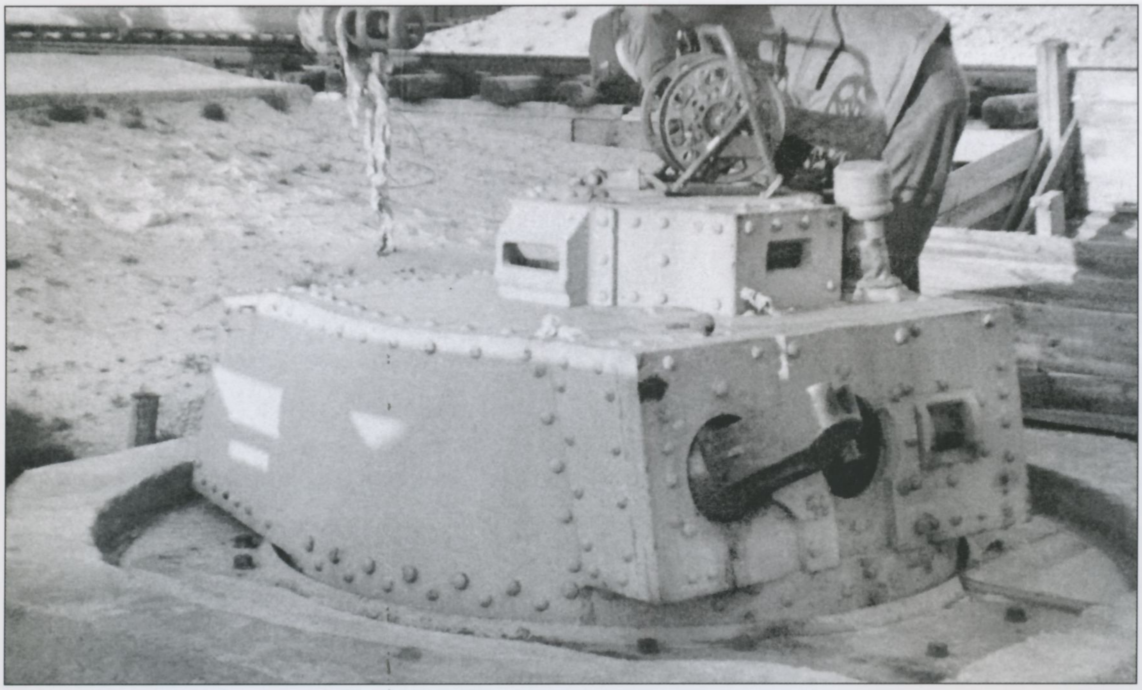
Panzerstellung



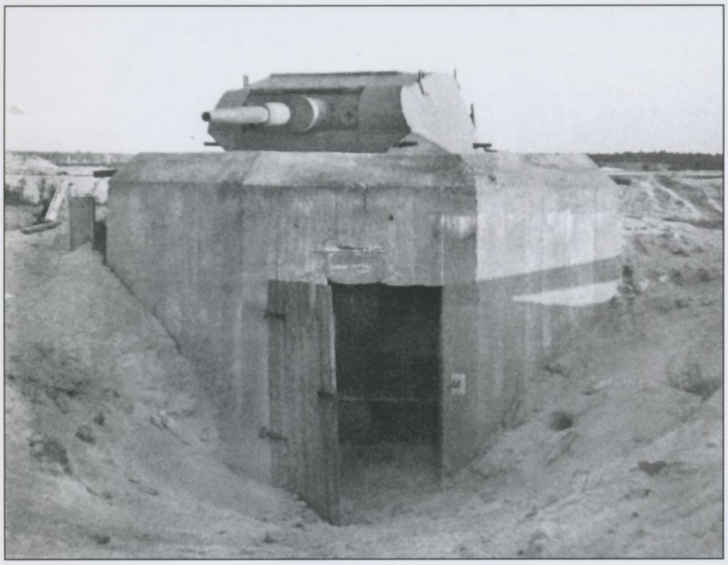


The obsolete Pz.Kpfw.38(t) turret was also widely used for coastal defense like this example near the coast in Marseilles.

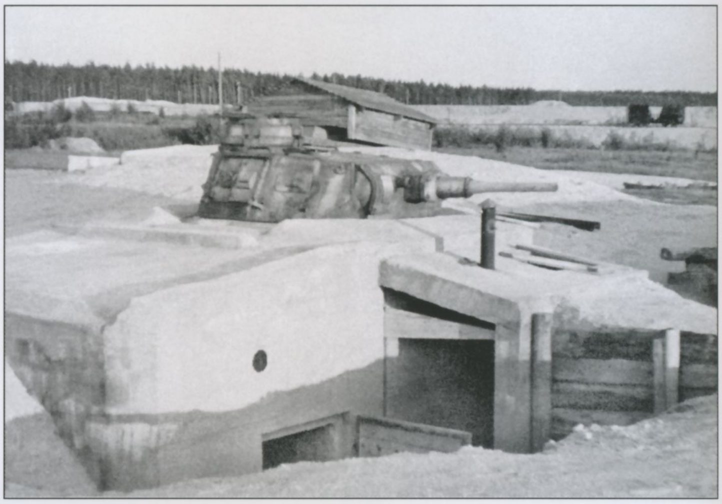
One of the more widely used turrets for coastal defense in Normandy was the old Renault FT turret like this example on a tobruk in the harbor of Grandcamps-les-Bains.



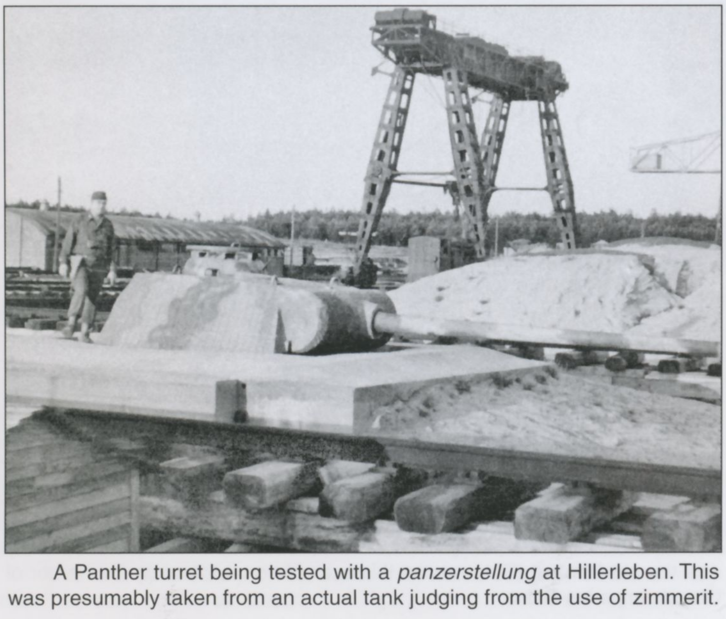
The Rheinmetall proving ground was one of the main test centers for *panzerstellung*, and this is an example of a Pz.Kpfw.38(t) *panzerstellung*.



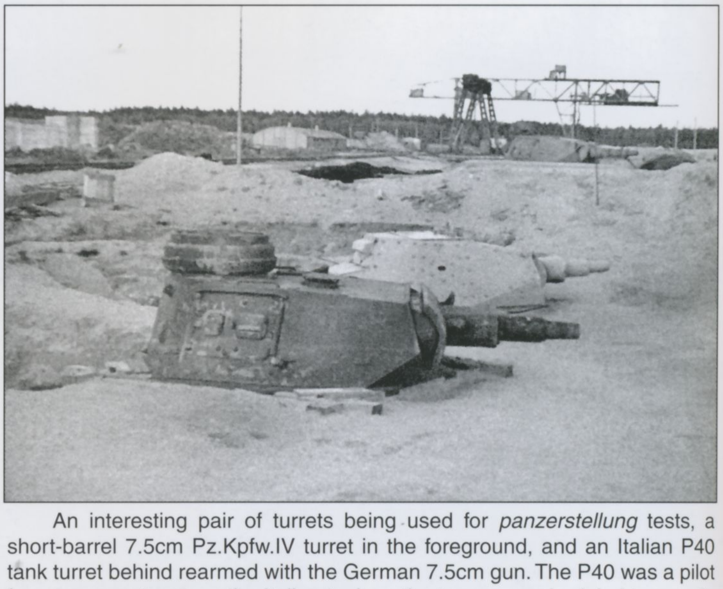
An example of a Pz.Kpfw.III *panzerstellung* at Hillersleben showing the rear armored access door.



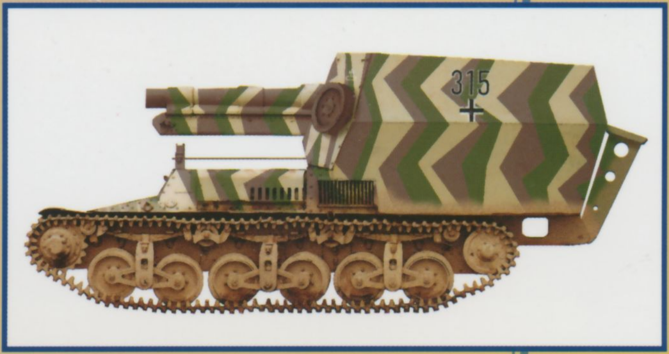
Another type of Pz.Kpfw.III *panzerstellung* at the Hillersleben proving ground.

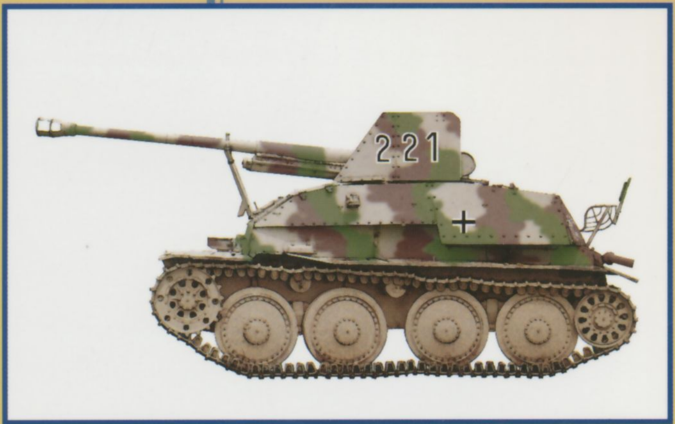


A Panther turret being tested with a *panzerstellung* at Hillerleben. This was presumably taken from an actual tank judging from the use of zimmerit.



An interesting pair of turrets being used for *panzerstellung* tests, a short-barrel 7.5cm Pz.Kpfw.IV turret in the foreground, and an Italian P40 tank turret behind rearmed with the German 7.5cm gun. The P40 was a pilot for a program to rearm the Italian tank as the type was scheduled to remain in production in Italy in 1944.





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